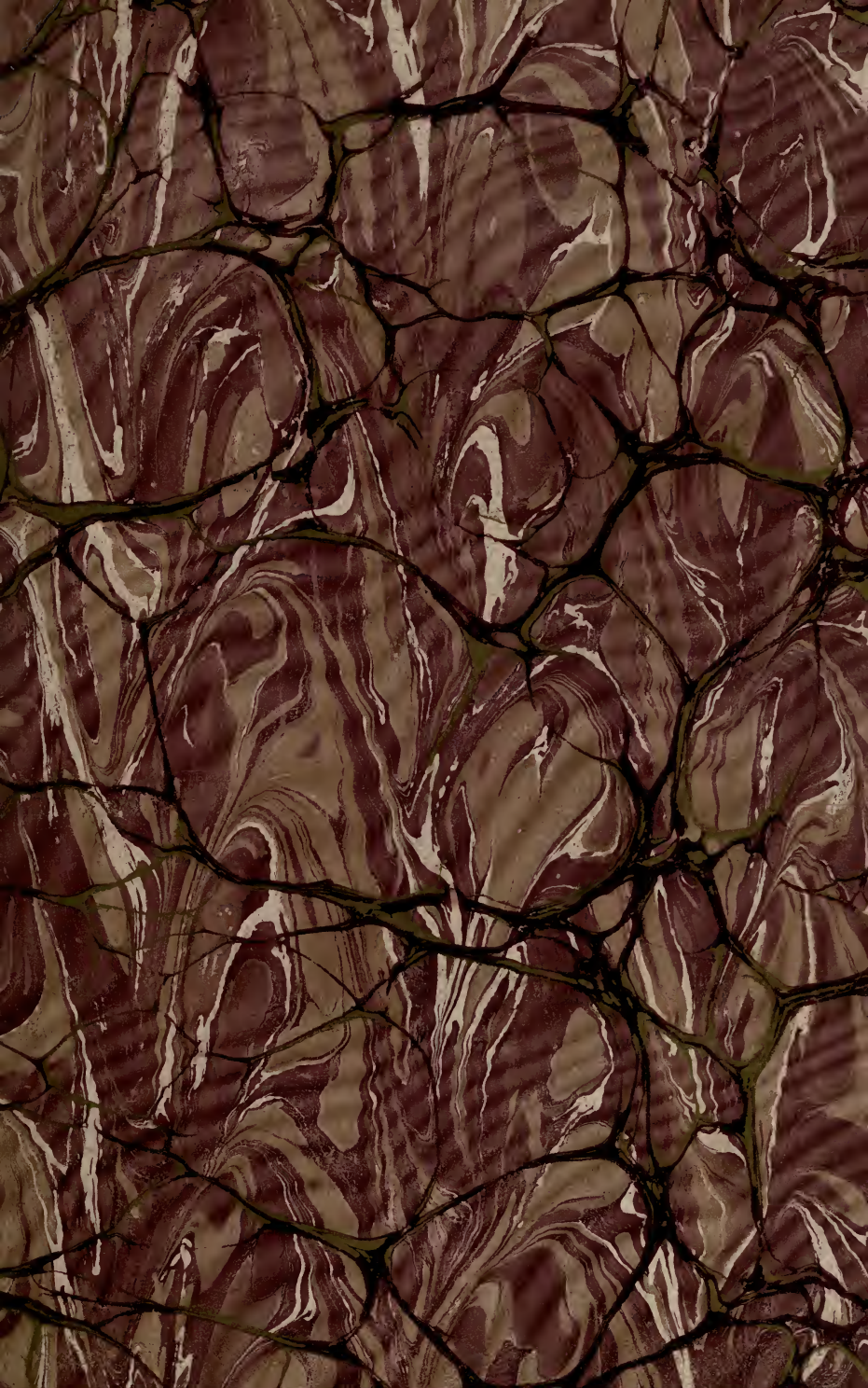

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LETTERS OF
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

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OF

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

EDITED BY

CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

VOL. I, PART I

(Bound for Horatio N. Fraser)

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS
1894

LETTERS OF

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

EDITED BY

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VOLUME I.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

In making the following selection from the great mass of Mr. Lowell's letters which was in my hands, my attempt was to secure for it, so far as possible, an autobiographic character. And, in the main, this has not been difficult, for few writers have given in their letters a more faithful representation of themselves, and of few men is the epistolary record more complete from youth to age. But portions of every man's life are essentially private, and knowledge of them belongs by right only to those intimates whom he himself may see fit to trust with his entire confidence. Vulgar curiosity is, indeed, always alert to spy into these sanctities, and is too often gratified, as in some memorable and mournful instances in recent years, by the infidelities of untrustworthy friends. There was nothing in Mr. Lowell's life to be concealed or excused. But he had the reserves of a high and delicate nature, reserves to be no less respected after death than during life, and nothing will, I hope, be found in these volumes which he himself might have regretted to see in print. Mr. Lowell, indeed, made to the public in his poetry such revelation of his inward experiences and emotions as he alone had the right to make, and such as may well suffice to

satisfy all legitimate interest in the spiritual development of the poet and in the nature of his most intimate and sacred human relations. Read together, his poems and his letters show him with rare completeness as he truly was.

So many of his friends and correspondents have put me under obligations by intrusting to me the letters he had addressed to them, that I will not undertake to name them all. I beg them each to accept my thanks. One difficulty only I have felt in regard to the use of these letters. Some of them contained such expressions of affection for those to whom they were addressed, or of admiration for their work, as might seem intended for their eyes alone. And yet these expressions were so characteristic of their writer's nature and of the regard in which he held his friends, that to omit them all would be to leave an imperfect and maimed impression of the quickness and warmth of his sympathies and the charm of his intercourse. If I have printed any letter which the person to whom it was addressed may regret to see in type, I beg him to pardon me for the indiscretion, on the ground of its exhibition of traits essential to the likeness of the self-drawn portrait of his friend.

To one of my own as well as of Mr. Lowell's nearest friends, Mr. Leslie Stephen, I am glad to owe so much as makes indispensable a special acknowledgment of my debt. The letter with which he has favored me, describing Lowell as he knew him, is a sketch which for its vital resemblance no other hand could have drawn.

Some letters which I should have been glad to use

have reached me too late; others have perished or are not now to be found. But it is a satisfaction to believe that, however much they might have added to the interest of these volumes, they would have afforded no new aspect of their writer.

CHARLES ELIOT NORTON.

SHADY HILL, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
July, 1893.

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LETTERS OF

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

I

1819–1839

EARLY LIFE.—COLLEGE DAYS.—RUSTICATION IN CONCORD.—IN THE HARVARD LAW-SCHOOL.—FIRST LITERARY VENTURES.

LETTERS TO R. T. S. LOWELL, W. H. SHACKFORD, G. B. LORING, C. U. SKATES.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1819, on the 22d of February, a day dear to Americans as the birthday of Washington.

There was a happy conjunction of stars at his birth. Family stock, parents, condition in life, time, and place, all were of the best.

His father, the Reverend Charles Lowell, was a man of gracious character and rare personal qualities. His presence was striking and comely, and his looks and manners corresponded in their benignity with the sweetness and simplicity of his nature. As a clergyman he was unusually beloved, and he discharged his clerical duties with devout fidelity and with quick and tender sympathies. He was a lover of books, and he possessed more culture, both literary and social, than most of the

clergy, his contemporaries. Mrs. Lowell was of an old Orkney family, and in her blood was a tincture of the romance of those solitary Northern isles. It was from her that her son believed himself to have inherited his love of nature and his poetic temperament.

The home at Cambridge, called Elmwood, after some fine English elms that stood in front of the house, was about four miles from Boston, where Dr. Lowell's parish lay. The house was spacious, built in colonial times, and had an air of comfort and of old-fashioned dignity.

It stood in pleasant grounds, of no great extent, but ample enough for lawn and garden and orchard and pasture and belts of trees. The country back of it was a farming region, with large spaces of solitary woods and open meadows. Fresh Pond, the haunt of herons and other shy birds and land-creatures, lay half a mile away. The whole district, though so near the city, was not yet suburbanized, and its people retained a rustic simplicity of life and character such as has almost disappeared, even in the remoter parts of New England, swept away by the flood of change during the last fifty years.

Elmwood stood fronting upon a lane, between two roads. Between it and the village—as it then was—of Cambridge, was much open space, pasture-land or mowing, which afforded good roaming-ground for schoolboys. To the right, looking eastward from the house, rose a low eminence, called Symonds' Hill, overhanging the river Charles, of which a bright stretch could be seen beyond.

In his "Cambridge Thirty Years Ago," Lowell has described the scene as it was in his childhood. Approach-

ing the village "from the west, by what was then called the New Road (it is called so no longer, for we change our names whenever we can, to the great detriment of all historical association), you would pause on the brow of Symonds' Hill to enjoy a view singularly soothing and placid. In front of you lay the town, tufted with elms, lindens, and horse-chestnuts, which had seen Massachusetts a colony, and were fortunately unable to emigrate with the Tories by whom, or by whose fathers, they were planted. Over it rose the noisy belfry of the college, the square brown tower of the church, and the slim yellow spire of the parish meeting-house, by no means ungraceful, and then an invariable characteristic of New England religious architecture. On your right, the Charles slipped smoothly through green and purple salt-meadows, darkened here and there with the blossoming black grass as with a stranded cloud-shadow. Over these marshes, level as water, but without its glare, and with softer and more soothing gradations of perspective, the eye was carried to a horizon of softly rounded hills. To your left hand, upon the Old Road, you saw some half-dozen dignified old houses of the colonial time, all comfortably fronting southward."

The most stately of these houses was that known as the Craigie House, already illustrious as having been the headquarters of Washington in 1776, and destined before long to receive a new and not less enduring fame as the home of Longfellow. At the end of the New Road towards Cambridge stood a line of six noble willow-trees, monuments of the stockade erected as a defence of the little settlement in its earliest days, and commemorated

by Lowell, when a young man, in his "Indian Summer Reverie," and again, in mature years, in his "Under the Willows." These two poems should be read by those who would gain a knowledge of the scenes familiar to his boyhood, and learn how the intensity of his affection for his native place deepened the sentiment with which he cherished the memories and associations of his happy childhood.

He was the youngest of the household of four brothers and two sisters. He was a handsome boy and his mother's darling. There was nothing precocious in his intelligence, but from his earliest days he was sensitive to the influences of Nature and a keen observer of the aspects of her life. He had the poetic temperament, which showed itself in his quick emotions and ready sympathies. His development was healthy; he was full of boyish spirits, liking out-doors better than the school-room, and acquiring more through his unconsciously exercised powers of observation than through lessons conned from books. His first schooling was at a dame-school in Cambridge.

Lowell has told some of his childish reminiscences in a little poem inserted in the Introduction to the First Series of "the Biglow Papers." It is the record of conditions of childhood which have long since passed away, together with the simplicity of life which made them possible; but the record, as he says, will not seem wanting in truth to those survivors of the old time "whose fortunate education began in a country village."

His father's nature was hospitable, and his family connection so wide that the boy had early the chance of see-

ing a pleasant side of social life. His knowledge of the world outside his immediate surroundings was extended by his being taken frequently as a companion by his father on his long drives to exchange Sunday services with his clerical brethren in country towns and villages—drives often a good day's journey from home. It was on these excursions that he learned much of the characteristics of the then almost unmixed Yankee population of New England—a knowledge which was, later, to stand him in good stead.

When he was eight or nine years old he was sent as a day-scholar to the boarding-school of Mr. William Wells, close to Elmwood. Mr. Wells was an Englishman, of good breeding as well as good learning. He carried on his school as nearly after an English fashion as was possible under widely different conditions. His discipline was sometimes sharp and severe, but he made his boys learn Latin, and in after-years "Parson Wilbur" showed the benefit of his instruction.

Few of the boy's letters have been preserved, and there is nothing in them to distinguish them from those of any happy and healthy child. They afford pleasant little glimpses of his life. Here are two written to his brother Robert, who was at the school kept by Mr. Bancroft, at Round Hill, Northampton:

TO MASTER ROBERT T. S. LOWELL

Jan. 25, 1827.

My dear brother The dog and the colt went down to-day with our boy for me and the colt went before and then the horse and slay [sleigh] and dog—I went

to a party and I danced a great deal and was very happy—I read french stories—The colt plays very much—and follows the horse when it is out.

Your affectionate brother

JAMES R. LOWELL.

I forgot to tell you that sister mary has not given me any present but I have got three books

TO THE SAME Nov. 2, 1828.

My Dear Brother,—I am now going to tell you melancholy news. I have got the ague together with a gumbile. I presume you know that September has got a lame leg, but he grows better every day and now is very well but still limps a little. We have a new scholar from round hill. his name is Hooper and we expect another named Penn who I believe also comes from there. The boys are all very well except Nemaise, who has got another piece of glass in his leg and is waiting for the doctor to take it out, and Samuel Storrow is also sick. I am going to have a new suit of blue broadcloth clothes to wear every day and to play in. Mother tells me that I may have any sort of buttons I choose. I have not done anything to the hut but if you wish I will. I am now very happy; but I should be more so if you were there. I hope you will answer my letter if you do not I shall write you no more letters. when you write my letters you must direct them all to me and not write half to mother as generally do. Mother has given me the three volumes of tales of a grandfather.

farewell

Yours truly

JAMES R. LOWELL.

You must excuse me for making so many mistakes. You must keep what I have told you about my new clothes a secret if you dont I shall not divulge any more secrets to you. I have got quite a library. The Master has not taken his rattan out since the vacation. Your little kitten is as well and as playful as ever and I hope you are to for I am sure I love you as well as ever. Why is grass like a mouse you cant guess that he he he ho ho ho ha ha ha hum hum hum.

In 1834, when he was fifteen years old, Lowell entered Harvard College as a freshman. He was a shy youth, of genial disposition, of high spirits, of undeveloped tastes, but already feeling in himself the stir of powers of the nature of which he was still ignorant. He became popular among his classmates, and made friends with some of them, especially with one who afterwards rose to distinction in political life, the late Honorable George Bailey Loring. Outside of his own class he formed a warm friendship with Mr. William H. Shackford, three years his senior in college, and his letters to these two friends afford the best picture of his life in those days.

The College was very different then from the University of the present day. Its resources were narrow, its teachers and scholars comparatively few in number. The four classes from 1835 to 1838 counted up to but two hundred students in all. Among the professors were some men of eminence, as, for instance, Pierce in mathematics and Felton in Greek. Ticknor was still professor of belles-lettres when Lowell entered college, but Longfellow succeeded him in 1836. The president

was Josiah Quincy, whose high and vigorous nature impressed itself on the little community over which he ruled, and to whom Lowell has paid an admirable and worthy tribute of respect in his essay on "A Great Public Character."

Lowell enjoyed his college days. "Almost everybody," he says in the essay just referred to, "looks back regretfully to the days of some Consul Plancus. Never were eyes so bright, never had wine so much wit and good-fellowship in it, never were we ourselves so capable of the various great things we have never done. . . . This is especially true of college life, when we first assume the titles without the responsibilities of manhood, and the president of our year is apt to become our Plancus very early."

TO W. H. SHACKFORD

Cambridge, Jan. 6, 1836.

Dearest Shack,— . . . As for myself, I have had a very happy "new year's day," as far at least as presents go. I have been presented with a book, which I rather think you have heard me speak of buying, namely, Hilliard & Gray's beautiful edition of Milton, very handsomely bound in calf or sheep, I don't know which, for there is a diversity of opinion in the family about it, some saying one and some another; father says it's calf, and as that is considered the handsomest, I of course agree with him. The *English* edition of Coleridge's works has also been given me by my "paternal relation." You see the editiomania has not left me yet. With some stray cash, I have purchased Butler and Beattie

also; these as well as Coleridge belong to the Aldine Edition of the British Poets. Did you ever read "Hudibras"? It always *was* and always *will be* a great favorite of mine, an inexhaustible source of mirth from beginning to end. Who but Butler would have thought of so apt and amusing a simile as this,

> "And now, like lobster boiled, the morn
> From black to red begins to turn"?

. . . I am reading the life of Milton, and find it very interesting; *his* first taste (as well as *Cowley's*) for poetry was formed by reading Spenser. I am glad to have such good examples, for Spenser was always my favorite poet. I like the metre of the "Faëry Queene"; Beattie's "Minstrel" is in the same. Apropos of poetry, I myself (you need not turn up your nose and grin)—yes, I myself have cultivated the Muses, and have translated one or two odes from Horace, *your* favorite Horace. I like Horace much, but prefer Virgil's Bucolics to his Odes, most of them. If you have your Horace by you, turn to the IX. Satire, 1st Book, and read it, and see if you don't like it (in an expurgated edition). . . . You advise me to attend to chemistry. I intend to; I always had a taste for it, as I have for everything experimental. Did you ever attend at all to the making of Latin poetry? I always wondered why they didn't teach it here. I think it ought to be attended to here as much as in Europe. I shall study it, and the first attempt I make shall be "Ad Patrem optimum"; the second, "Ad carissimum amicum Gulielmum Shackfordum." If I write anything I'll send it to you. When my poems are pub-

lished I'll send them to you. Does chemistry belong to your branch of instruction?* I like mineralogy as much as ever, but the snow covers the ground, so that I can collect none except from the mine. Hilliard & Gray are going to publish a beautiful edition of Shakespeare next month (price $14, 8 vols., royal 8vo), beautifully printed, which I intend to buy if I can afford it. I admire your seal, which, however, you unluckily forgot to make backwards. I got it off whole. Last term I made a few attempts at wood-cutting, and really succeeded about as well as, if not better than, "old Caxton." Without looking, except in the "booke of memorie," can you tell me who he was? I am quite an antiquary, the pursuit of black-letter is very congenial to my tastes. By-the-bye, Milton has excited my ambition to read all the Greek and Latin classics which he did. Your most affectionate friend,

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

TO THE SAME

Cambridge, Feb. 1, 1836.

. . . The "deturs" have been given out, and I have got Akenside's Poems. They are the best "deturs" that have been given out this long while, they say; they are bound most beautifully (all alike) in yellow calf, and—what I consider very appropriate—have the College arms stamped on the covers, in gold. They have a new stamp for the inside also. It has the College arms, and underneath the old inscription, with this addition, "pro insigni in studiis diligentiâ." . . .

* Mr. Shackford was, at this time, an instructor at Exeter Academy, N. H.

TO G. B. LORING

Boston, 23 (?) Dec., 1836.

My dear Friend,— . . . Here I am, alone in Bob's room with a blazing fire, in an atmosphere of "poesy" and soft-coal smoke. Pope, Dante, a few of the older English poets, Byron, and last, not least, some of my own compositions, lie around me. Mark my modesty. I don't put myself in the same line with the rest, you see. . . . Been quite "grouty" all the vacation, "black as Erebus." Discovered two points of very striking resemblance between myself and Lord Byron; and if you will put me in mind of it, I will propound next term, or in some other letter, "Vanity, thy name is Lowell"! . . .

> "Vo solcando un mar crudele,
> Senza vele e senza sarte," . . .

as Metastasio says in Italian, and which, transmuted into the good old vernacular, may be expressed in the words of Shakespeare—I am embarked "on a sea of troubles.". . .

Believe me yours,

J. R. L.

TO HIS MOTHER

Cambridge, Jan. 28, 1837.

. . . I am engaged in several poetical effusions, one of which I have dedicated to you, who have always been the patron and encourager of my youthful muse. If you wish to see me as much as I do you, I shall be satisfied.*

* In the summer of 1837 Dr. and Mrs. Lowell went to Europe. Mrs. Lowell wrote from Paris, May 27, 1838: "Babie Jamie!

TO G. B. LORING

Cambridge, Elmwood, 1837.

Dear George, — . . . What think you of the epigram and "effusion" I sent you in my last? Trusting they proved acceptable, and premising that they serve to fill up a letter, I send you another little piece, which I wrote (as indeed you will perceive by reading) in literally a *moment* of leisure. It is addressed to our old horse-chestnut, whose protecting arms are thrown around the room in which I am sitting. It is the unhappy, but I trust not disconsolate, survivor of two, *one* of which stood at the other corner of the "family mansion," and expired last summer of a lingering, and (I should think from the groanings of its aged limbs in the blast) painful, disease.

OUR OLD HORSE-CHESTNUT TREE

1

Long hast thou waved thy giant pride,
Thou old horse-chestnut tree,
Around that room, whose casements wide
First brought the light to me.

2

And thou hast heard our merry shout
(My brother Bob and I),

your poetry was very pleasing to me, and I am glad to have a letter, but not to remind me of you, for you are seldom long out of my head. . . . Don't leave your whistling, which used to cheer me so much. I frequently listen to it here, tho' far from you." In later years, Lowell often recalled how, on his daily return from school, he used to whistle as he came near home, to announce his coming to his mother, who seldom failed to be sitting at her window to welcome him.

When 'neath thy shade we played about
In careless infancy.

3

Then, too, in boyhood's prouder * day,
Rocked on thy limbs to rest,
We've listened to the song-bird's lay,
Or watched him build his nest.

4

Thou still the same thy trunk dost rear,
Thy moss-clad boughs dost wave;
While *we* are changing every year,
And hasting to the grave.

If you can't read it, 'tis not much lost.

Your affectionate friend,

J. R. L.

TO W. H. SHACKFORD

Cambridge, Feb. 26, 1837.

My dear Shack,— . . . Since I wrote to you (not last) I was chosen into the Hasty Pudding Club. At the very first meeting I attended I was chosen secretary, which is considered the most honorable office in the club, as the records are kept in verse (*mind*, I do not say *poetry*). This first brought my rhyming powers into notice, and since that I have been chosen to deliver the next anniversary poem by a vote of twenty out of twenty-four. *En passant*, the honors seem to thicken around my exalted head lately, for I received a very respectful note from Mr. Amos Binney, to act as one of the marshals

* "Prouder" because, no longer in the trammels of petticoats, we "strutted superior" in a jacket and trousers.

at the ordination of Mr. Bartol, who is to be ordained colleague of the Rev. Charles Lowell, D.D. . . . on Wednesday next, 1st of March. Think of that!

I thought your brother Charles was studying law. I intend to study that myself, and probably shall be Chief Justice of the United States. . . .

Your very affectionate and true friend,

J. R. L.

TO G. B. LORING.

Cambridge, Wednesday, April 5, 1837.

Dear George,— . . . This day, the very first of the vacation (a word which rings merrily in the ears of many on account of the relief it brings from study)—on this day, I say, have I, erst the most incorrigible of time's fritterers, learned (or rather read, for it is very easy) twenty (!) pages in Cicero and eight chapters in Herodotus, and all this of my own accord, and it is not yet three o'clock.

Truly, as you say, "the leopard *has* changed his spots and the Ethiopian his skin"! I would not have believed it myself a year ago, but we grow wiser as we grow older, and not a day passes that does not add its share to our stock of wisdom and experience. For my own part I can say with Socrates, *γηράσκω δ' αἰει πολλὰ διδασκόμενος*, or better by a little alteration, *ἡβάσκω*, etc.—if that may be a true Greek word, and I think it is.

Well, I suppose you are at home, "sweet, sweet home!" So am I, and it does my heart good. As I run about over the same familiar spots which I trod in joyous, careless

infancy, my heart leaps again, and the innocent days of my childhood come over me like a dream. "Oh, it sickens the heart" to be long from "home"; but it softens it, and even in the moss-grown trees we

"Meet at each step a friend's familiar face!"

* * * * *

"While long neglected, but at length caress'd,
His faithful dog salutes the welcome guest,
Points to the master's eyes (where'er they roam)
His wistful face, and whines a welcome home."

CAMPBELL.

"Mark yon old mansion frowning through the trees,
Whose hollow turret woos the whistling breeze.
That casement, arch'd with ivy's brownest shade,
First to these eyes the light of heaven convey'd!"

ROGERS.

Excuse my making such long quotations—but they are so much, so infinitely, superior to anything *I* could say, that they excuse themselves. Then, too,

"As through the garden's desert paths I rove,
What fond illusions swarm in every grove!
Childhood's loved group revisits every scene,
The tangled woodwalk and the tufted green!"

ROGERS.

How exactly do these descriptions suit with my present situation! "Old mansion," "desert walks," everything!

To revisit the home of one's childhood has much of joy, but it is a joy mingled with sadness. To think how soon those flowers that have bloomed, those fields that

have smiled, and those trees that have so often arrayed themselves "in summer's garb" for *you*, may bloom and smile and array themselves for another!

You may think me a fool to talk in such a moralizing strain, but, George, I have lately talked less and thought more. I mean to read next term, if possible, a chapter in my Bible every night. Indeed, I mean to this vacation. "Be wise *to-day*, 'tis madness to defer," and it is an old Spanish proverb, that "hell is paved with good intentions." *À propos*, I intend to satirize in my poem those *fools* that are ambitious of appearing to despise religion, etc. — *this*, I think, you would not blame as "personality." *En passant*, "impersonation" is called by Stuart and Whately one of the greatest of the poet's powers, and the most peculiar to him.

I am seated before a fireplace big enough to live in, with a good soft-coal fire in a standing grate, in a chair the fac-simile of the one at my room. Speaking of the chair at my room puts me in mind of —— again, and he puts me in mind of a line in the "Bard of Avon," or "Swan of Avon," *ut placeat*,

> "A goodly apple, rotten at the core";

and filling out the couplet by a line of my own (though it be presumption to add to Shakespeare), it would read thus,

> "A goodly apple, rotten at the core,"
> A handsome fellow, but a deuced bore!

'Tis pity his *penetrating* qualities were not as great in one sense as they are in the other. Truly, as Cicero

says of Q. Fabius Maximus (Cunctator), who can tell, "quae scientia juris *augurii*," belongs to ——! . . .

Your most affectionate friend,

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

TO THE SAME

Cambridge, I don't know the date.
[April 10, 1837.]

Dear George,— . . . I have written about an hundred lines of my *poem* (?), and I suspect it is going to be a pretty good one. *At least*, some parts of it will *take*. 'Tis a pretty good subject, but I find it enlarging as I progress. "Crescit eundo," like the balls of snow we used to roll when we were boys. By the way, that's not a bad simile. I might alter it into an avalanche and bring it into the poem, in which I intend to say how much beyond me the subject is. . . .

I am as busy as a bee—almost. I study and read and write all the time.

I have laid my hands on a very pretty edition of Cowper, which I intend to keep. In two volumes.

I have also "pinned" some letters relating to myself in my early childhood, by which it seems I was a miracle of a boy for sweetness of temper. "Credite posteri"! I believe I *was*, although perhaps you would not think it *now*.

George, you are in a very dangerous situation. Surrounded as you are by temptations, with Miss K—— your next-door neighbor, and the eyes of Miss H—— blazing across but a small meadow, you cannot be too careful of yourself. You may trust my advice, for, in

common with Petrarch, Dante, Tasso, and Byron, I was desperately in love before I was ten years old. What pangs I have suffered my own heart, perhaps, only knows. . . .

Your most affectionate friend,

LOWELL.

TO THE SAME

Cambridge, April 14, 1837.

. . . You can't imagine how delightful it is out here. The greatest multitude of birds of every description that I ever recollect to have seen. The grass is fast growing green under the kind sun of spring—that is, in southerly aspects. Every day that the sun shines I take my book and go out to a bank in our garden, and lie and read. 'Tis almost as pleasant as

"To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell."

This afternoon I read through Beattie's "Minstrel," which I never read carefully before. It does not seem to me in most parts to possess fire enough—you can't see the "kindling touch" of genius in it. I like the poetry that sends a sort of a cold thrill through one (not an unpleasant one), and brings tears into one's eyes. Such to me are some parts of Byron and Campbell. . . .

The gooseberry bushes are beginning to leaf out. Though this is not the season to admire the

"Pomp of woods, and garniture of fields,"

yet I think 'tis one of the most delightful seasons of the year. The birds now sing loudest, and the fowling-

piece breaks "the quiet of the scene" less often than at any other time. Besides, 'tis beautiful to watch the different steps of Nature's toilet as she arrays herself in the flowery dress of spring. It almost seems as if one could see the grass grow green. Then, too, the sky is so clear!

I keep my journal *almost* as diligently as you can yours. But I have less time for it than you. However, we shall both have *something* to read when we meet again, when you come back to this "infernal hole," as you politely style it. To me 'tis not an "infernal hole," I can tell you. It is my birthplace, the "home of my childhood," and to me its fields are full as green and its woods as sombre as any in "less privileged earth." Show me a place so sweet as that most delightful of spots, "sweet Auburn"! Match me Fresh Pond! Your great fish-kettle is nothing to it! Show me any elms like the Cambridge ones! why, they're celebrated! their "fama volat, crescitque eundo."

I have been reading "The Doctor," among other things, lately. 'Tis a capital book for a man to read who wishes to obtain a superficial knowledge of a great many subjects at an easy rate. No, I don't mean to say, "to obtain," but to show off an apparent knowledge. I don't mean to say that the subjects treated of are touched on superficially, except in as much as is necessary from the nature of the work. . . .

TO W. H. SHACKFORD

Elmwood, Cambridge, July 22, 1837.

My dear Shack,— . . . My poem went off very well indeed, and, I hear, was very generally satisfactory.

President Quincy said afterwards to one of my class that the performances were "highly creditable."

I have been chosen, with others, to preside over the destinies of *Harvardiana** during the ensuing year. This was somewhat flattering to my vanity considering that I'm one of the youngest in my class. . . .

. . . Shack, pity me! I am in love—and have been so for some time, hopelessly in love. Perhaps you know how to pity me. . . .

Your affectionate friend,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Boston, Aug. 14, 1837.

My dear Friend,— . . . I have just returned from an excursion into the country, where I have been engaged shooting and fishing and going through the usual routine of country amusements. But I am glad to get home again. . . .

. . . To-day it is clearing up, and we shall have a specimen of our pleasant weather, which is as delightful as any in the world—as Whittier says (and I shall always like him the better for "sticking up" for *old New* England),

"My own green land forever!"

Yankee-land, after all, is no place to be sneezed at, especially when 'tis one's birthplace. Hath not Montgomery said,

"There is a land of ev'ry land the pride,
Beloved of Heaven o'er all the earth beside"?

* The college magazine of that date.

Whittier

and something else too, which I can't recall, about a spot in that land? And what are they—that land and that spot?

"That land thy country, and that spot thy home!"

Shack, how well I remember the first time I ever saw you "to speak to." You were a haughty (not by nature, but rank) Senior, I an humble Freshman, too proud to wear a jacket and afraid to wear a coat! You spoke to me kindly—how astonished I was! In my bashfulness I had always considered the Seniors as a superior race. But now I saw that, like Southey's "Ereenia," they could stoop to love a mortal. You were the first Senior I ever visited, and, if you recollect, it was no easy task to induce me to visit you, and then I did it stealthily "Eheu! jam satis!" methinks I hear you exclaim, but they are (those days of Freshmanic innocence)

"A something glittering in the sun
For mem'ry to look back upon!" . . .

TO G. B. LORING

Elmwood, Cambridge,
Wednesday, Aug. 23, 1837.

I

I tak' my pen in hand, dear Lorin,'
To write—tho' I'm afraid o' borin'
A chiel wha a' his time is porin'
Owre* grave design,
Wi' gems his mem'ry's pockets storin'
Frae learning's mine.

* "Owre"—O'er.

2

Yet, as I ane day hope to climb
Thro' some sma' chink to realms o' rhyme,
I trust ye winna think't a crime
If I scrawl verse,
But say I might hae wasted time
In writin' worse.*

3

Besides, I'm readin' Burns the poet,
And, as I wish'd to let you know it,
I thought the brawest gate to show it
An' mak' ye smile,
Wad be (tho' far I fa' below it)
To try his style.

4

Having set Pegasus agoin',
Wi' weel-nibb'd pen, and ink aflowin'
While yet my rhymin'-fit is growin',
Ise† stick it out,
An' let ye ken in stanzas glowin'
What I'm about.

5

At present, then, your friend's reposin'
Upon a couch, his een half-closin.'
Sma', common minds wad think him dozin'
Or aiblins fou,‡
While a' the time he's fast composin'
These lines to you.

* Quaere. "In writin' werse," as Sam Veller says (?) thus—"I might hae wasted time In writn' werse"—scil. verse.
† "Ise"—I will—I'll.
‡ "Aiblins"—Anglice, perhaps. "Fou"—corned.

6

You *must* excuse this ramblin' letter;
Upon my word I canna better,
For luve to thought's an awfu' fetter
As e'er was seen,
An' 'twas but late yestreen I met her
And—ah! those een!

7

Those liquid een o' winsome blue
(Like sparklin' draps o' heav'n's ain dew),
Those modest cheeks o' changin' hue,
Are aye before me;
Where'er I turn they meet my view
An' hover owre me!

8

To think o' her an' naething but her
Puts my puir heart in sic a flutter
That, troth! at last I canna utter
Ae* thing aright,
An' aften scarce escape the gutter
In braid daylight!

9

Fu' aft I've talk'd o' laughin' girls
An' sparklin' een and auburn curls
An' smiles disclosin' rows o' pearls,
Wi' mickle glee—
But she, alas! my heartstrings dirls†
In spite o' me!

* "Ae"—One, in contradistinction to "Ane," which is used as in "Any one," "One says," etc.
† "Dirls"—causes to flutter.

10

Na, ne'er till now I've felt the sway
Of een that mock pure Hesper's ray,
An' voice as sweet as when in May
The playfu' breeze
Sighs aft as if it fain wad stay
Amid the trees.

11

10 o'clock P.M.

Geordie, while I was up here writin',
This letter dull to you inditin'
(Duty with Inclination fightin'
To keep me to it),
For rhymes my harmless goosequill bitin,'
I never knew it!

12

"Knew *what?*" you cry, "as I'm a sinner
You know perhaps—I'm sure I dinna!"
Why, Geordie, as I hope to win her,
While I sat here
She had come down to stay to dinner!
Wasna *that* queer?*

13

How ilka word o' hers I drank
(*You* will not blame me if I'm frank)!
How ilka slightest movement sank
Deep in my breast!
Methought this earth were a' a blank,
By her unblest.

* Now she is gone my spirits, alas! have fled with her, as you may see by the dulness of my versification.

14

Oh! had I but *ae* lock o' hair
That now sae fondly nestles there,
Just peepin' out (her smiles to share)
Frae 'neath her bonnet,
For a' life's ills I wadna care
While gazin' on it!

15

The fact is, Geordie, I'm a fule,
Tho' nat accordin' t'ony rule
(As 'tis wi' some) drumm'd in at schule
By dint o' thrashin',
But worse—I'm Cupid's veriest tool,
The slave o' passion.

16

Yet, walkin' wi' her for a mile,
Hearin' her words, winnin' her smile,
Feelin' the force o' young luve's wile
In ilka dimple—
Is quite eneugh the sense to rile
O' wise or simple.

17

Dear frien', I charge ye ance for all
Keep out o' sight this silly scrawl,
Or may auld Clootie* on ye fall
Wi' awfu' scratches,
An' roast ye in infernal hall
Wi' brunstane matches!

* "Auld Clootie"—the Deil—Old Nick.

18

May wee imps haunt your restless sleep,
An' when frae 'neath the claithes ye peep,
Wi' grinning face upon ye leap,
An' sair torment ye,
Because ye didna secret keep
The rhymes I sent ye.

19

Or, warse than a', may certain lasses
Cut faithless Geordie as he passes,
An' sternly eye wi' quizzin'-glasses
The luckless swain,
An' smilin' walk wi' stupid asses
To gie him pain!

Dear Geordie I end—I trust you are well,
And send the best wishes of
Yours, J. R. L.

Lowell did not find the regular discipline and required studies of the college course suited to his taste. Other interests were more to him than those of the recitation-room. Required by the system of instruction which then prevailed to pursue certain studies for which he had no bent, with excusable boyish folly he asserted his independence by neglecting the set lesson, often substituting for it something of more worth intrinsically and for himself. But this negligence, persisted in, in spite of the remonstrance of friends, brought him finally under college discipline, and in the early summer of 1838 he was suspended for a period of several months, and was sent to Concord to carry

$\frac{2y}{1}$

Henry D. Thoreau.

on his studies under the charge of the minister of the town.

The self-reproach for the pain inflicted on his parents by his conduct, and the recognition of his own self-indulgence, were not embittered by the sense of any serious moral delinquency. The seclusion and tranquillity of Concord gave him opportunity for reflection.

He found Concord dull. "It appears a pretty decent sort of place," he wrote, "but I've no patience with it. I'm homesick and all that sort of thing." He was not yet prepared to know Emerson, who might have helped him; but he had been bred in an atmosphere of conservatism in matters of the intellect and the spirit, and he shared in the then common aversion to Emerson's teaching.

In one of his letters he says: "I feel like a fool. I must go down and see Emerson, and if he doesn't make me feel more like one, it won't be for want of sympathy. He is a good-natured man in spite of his doctrines."

Of another Concord celebrity he wrote: "I met Thoreau last night, and it is exquisitely amusing to see how he imitates Emerson's tone and manner. With my eyes shut, I shouldn't know them apart."

TO G. B. LORING

Concord(ia discors), July 8, 1838.

. . . Everybody almost is calling me "indolent," "blind dependent on my own powers" and "on fate." Damn everybody! since everybody damns me. Everybody seems to see but one side of my character, and that the

worst. As for my dependence on my own powers, 'tis all fudge. As for fate, I believe that in every man's breast are the stars of his fortune, which, if he choose, he may rule as easily as does the child the mimic constellations in the orrery he plays with. I acknowledge, too, that I have been something of a dreamer, and have sacrificed, perchance, too assiduously on that altar to the "unknown God," which the Divinity has builded not with hands in the bosom of every decent man, sometimes blazing out clear with flame (like Abel's sacrifice) heaven-seeking; sometimes smothered with greenwood and earthward, like that of Cain. Lazy quotha! I haven't dug, 'tis true, but I have done as well, and "since my free soul was mistress of her choice, and could of *books* distinguish her election," I have chosen what reading I pleased and what friends I pleased, sometimes scholars and sometimes not. I don't care that my companions should be able to calculate the sine and cosine of every step they take to serve a friend—not I. True,

> "I have dreamed uncounted hours
> The visions that arise without a sleep,"

careless if the wise did shake their divine heads (or divining) and say,

> "Of such materials wretched men are made."

And up here at this infernal Concord I shall continue to, for I am lonely, and must live in the past and future. 'Tis true,

> "I deserved to feel wretched and lonely,"

but that makes no differ; besides, Divine Will says or sings that man is a two-legged creature that looks before and behind, and Divine Will is a better judge of character than I. These moonlight nights I spend mostly in walking, and I don't know a prettier scene than the two bridges and the hills by the river side. One longs to jump in, like Pewit in the German popular tales, and go to Elfland after the sheep which so excited the envy of his neighbors. How wags the world down in Cambridge? It'll be a long while before I walk the "banks of Cam," or take shelter from the sun *inter silvas Academiæ*. "Inter silvas academiæ *quaerere* verum!" True, 'tis mostly seeking, for few ever find it. Poor Truth dodges about among the trees and tries not to be caught. How many fools, like stout old Sir Walter Rawley, go hunting after an intellectual El Dorado, and bring home naught but yellow (sand) gold-seeming dust! I've almost a mind to turn idealist, and believe with Emerson that "this world is all a fleeting show, for man's delusion given." . . .

TO THE SAME

"Concord(ia Discors"), July 12, 1838.

. . . Many a man goes about this goodly world (for it is a *damned* goodly one) whose inner garment of intellect might have blushed beside the worst of the two shirts in Falstaff's regiment; yet he conceals it deftly by buttoning himself up tightly, yea, almost impenetrably, in a good, stout, borrowed overcoat of other men's ideas! Or, to make a more poetical illustration, many a man looks wise by reflecting the wisdom of another, even as

a stream, shallow in itself, seems, by reflecting a cloud, as deep as the cloud is high.

TO THE SAME

Aug. 9, 1838.

I have been reading the first volume of Carlyle's "Miscellanies" [then recently published]. One article, that on Burns, is worth all the rest to me. I like, too, the one on German Playwrights. There are fine passages in all.

One of Lowell's occupations during his stay at Concord was the writing of his "Class Poem"—the poem to be read on Class Day, the closing day of college life. His suspension extended over the day itself, so that he was not allowed to read the poem to his classmates, but it was printed for their use, and the little pamphlet, his first independently printed production, has become one of the desiderata of bibliomaniacs. As a poem it is perhaps above the general level of such performances; but though it gives evidence of literary talent, it shows that its writer was untouched by the new intellectual spirit, of which Emerson's was the clearest voice, as well as by the ferment in the conscience of New England, manifest chiefly in the self-sacrificing zeal of Garrison and the Abolitionists. Lowell was not yet among the "Transcendentalists." In the autumn, having received his bachelor's degree with his classmates, he returned to his home in Cambridge.

TO G. B. LORING

Elmwood, Sept. 22, 1838.

. . . No man ought to be a minister who has not a

special calling that way. I don't mean an old-fashioned special calling, with winged angels and fat-bottomed cherubs, but an inward one. In fact, I think that no man ought to be a minister who has not money enough to support him besides his salary. For the minister of God should not be thinking of his own and children's bread when dispensing the bread of life. I have been led to reflect seriously on the subject since I have thought of going into the Divinity School. Some men were made for peacemakers and others for shoemakers, and if each man follow his nose we shall all come out right at last. If I did not think that I should some day make a great fool of myself and marry (not that I would call *all* men fools who marry), I would enter the School to-morrow. Certain am I that it is not pleasant to work for a living anyway, but "we youth" must live, and verily this "money" is a very good thing, though on that account we need not fall down and worship it. The very cent on which my eye now rests may have done a great deal of good in its day: perhaps it has made glad the heart of the widow, and put a morsel of bread in the famishing mouths of her children; and perhaps it has created much misery: perhaps some now determined gambler began his career of sin by playing chuck-farthing with that very piece of stamped copper, etc. . . .

Alas! I don't feel as if I ought to have any time now "vacare Musis." And yet I hardly like to bid the "swate deludering cratures" farewell. A plan has been running in my head for some time, of writing a sort of dramatic poem on the subject of Cromwell. Those old

Roundheads have never had justice done them. They have only been held up as canting, psalm-singing, hypocritical rascals; as a sort of a foil for the open-hearted Cavalier. But it were a strange thing indeed if there were not somewhat in such men as Milton, Sidney, Hampden, Selden, and Pym. It always struck me that there was more true poetry in those old fiery-eyed, buff-belted warriors, with their deep, holy enthusiasm for liberty and democracy, political and religious; with their glorious trust in the arm of the Lord in battle—than in the dashing, ranting Cavaliers, who wished to restore their king that they might give vent to their passions, and go to sleep again in the laps of their mistresses, deaf to the cries of the poor and the oppressed. . . .

TO THE SAME

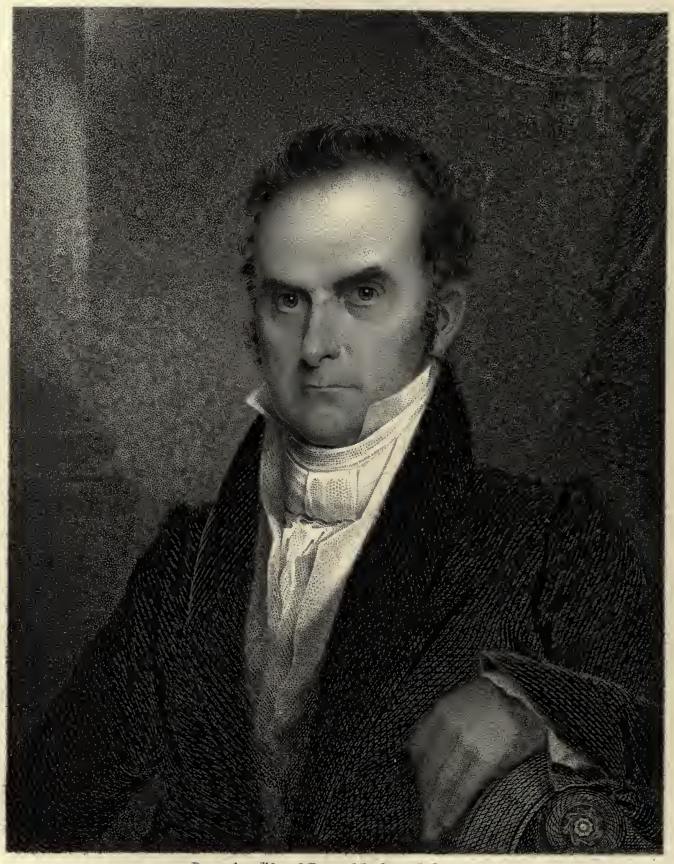
Elmwood, Oct. 11, 1838.

I am reading Blackstone with as good a grace and as few wry faces as I may.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Oct., 1838.

. . . A very great change has come o'er the spirit of my dream of life. I have renounced the law. I am going to settle down into a business man at last, after all I have said to the contrary. Farewell, a long farewell to all my greatness! I find that I cannot bring myself to like the law, and I am now looking out for a place "in a store." You may imagine that all this has not come to pass without a great struggle. I must expect to give up almost entirely all literary pursuits, and in-



Drawn from life ,and Engraved by James B. Longacre.

DANIEL WEBSTER.

Daniel Webster

stead of making rhymes devote myself to making money. If I thought it possible that I ever could love the law (one can't make a lawyer without it) I wouldn't hesitate a moment, but I am confident that I shall never be able even to be on speaking terms with it.

I have been thinking seriously of the ministry, but then—I have also thought of medicine, but then—still worse! . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Nov. 8, 1838.

. . . On Monday last I went into town to look out for a place, and was induced *en passant* to step into the United States Court, where there was a case pending, in which Webster was one of the counsel retained. I had not been there an hour before I determined to continue in my profession and study as well as I could.

Nov. 15.

. . . The elections in our town have been going on for the last three days, resulting in no choice; so that the goodly, venerable, and literary town of Cambridge is very likely to go unrepresented in the next session of the General Court. I shall vote as soon as I come of age, which will be by the next election but one. I shouldn't wonder if the peaceable young gentleman whom you knew in college flared up into a great political luminary. I am fast becoming ultra-democratic, and when I come up to see you, which I trust will be very soon, I intend to inoculate you with the (I won't call it by the technical term of "virus," because that's too hard a word, but with the) principle. I live in confident ex-

pectation of seeing that time when the people of England shall wake up and heave that vast incubus, which has full long oppressed religion, the Established Church, from their breast. Their slumber is already growing fitful and uneasy, and when they wake—"woe, woe to the riders that trample them down!" Liberty is now no longer a cant word in the mouths of knaves and fools; too long have poets sung and heroes bled, too long have poor, paltry *ignes fatui* decoyed enthusiasts into quagmires.

By the very last accounts from England, immense meetings had been held in all parts of England to petition Parliament for an equal representation. At Manchester Ebenezer Elliott, of whom you must have heard, a man of true genius, "the poor man's poet," was chairman of a meeting where three hundred thousand were said to have been present! When such a meeting was held there once before they were fired upon by the troops, but now they were afraid to send the soldiers among the people for fear of desertion. Mark that. *There* is a great and pregnant change ominous of much. It almost brings tears into my eyes when I think of this vast multitude starved, trampled upon, meeting to *petition* the government which oppressed them, and which *they* supported by taxes wrung out of the very children's life-blood. Verily, some enthusiasts have even ventured to assert that there are hearts, aye, even warm ones, under frieze jerkins! Gude sain us! what shall we come to when men venture to depart so much from the creed of their fathers? Seriously, I think that if we live the life allotted to mortals we shall see the throbs of that

heart, and see perhaps that it has good red blood like "our own"!

My dear George, there is no cant in all this, nor do I think you will suspect me of it, for I feel it all, and there is a hidden virtue in truth which recommends itself everywhere. As for the two great parties which divide this country, I for one dare to say that democracy does belong to neither of them, and certainly to neither exclusively—so I care not which whips. The Van Burenites have the stoutest lungs and shout loudly of "Jeffersonian democracy," but fair and softly wins the race. A third party, or rather no party, are secretly rising up in this country, whose voice will soon be heard. The Abolitionists are the only ones with whom I sympathize of the present extant parties. I've only written two verses of rhyme since I saw you. . . .

Your affectionate friend,

J. R. Lowell.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Jan. 7, 1839.

. . . I sometimes think that I have it in me, and shall one day do somewhat; meantime I am schooling myself and shaping my theory of poesy. I will read you when we meet (I hope soon) a fragmentary essay on poetry which I read at an A.Δ.Φ. meeting. It has some good things in it. I know, George, you won't take any such speeches as that last for vanity or foolishness, but as it was meant, an outpouring of my thoughts to a friendly bosom. You know me too well to think that my harmless vanity ("for who would trample at my side A few

pale buds, my garden's pride?") is too deeply ingrained to be ever eradicated. I even am vain enough to think that I have improved since we saw each other. . . .

TO THE SAME

Boston, Feb. 27, 1839.

. . . I have written a great deal of *pottery* lately, but as I am at "the office" I can only give you such scraps as I remember. If you ever see the *Post*, there is a Yankee song of mine in it this morning, beginning, "Ye Yankees of the Baystate." I will give you enough in my next. I have finished "The Dying Year," and it is pretty fair. . . .

I have quitted the law forever. So much for it. About lecturing in Andover. Do they pay anything? Would they like such an abstract lecture as I should give them? What time should you want me? I go to Concord on the first Wednesday in March—a week from next Wednesday. I hope to astonish them a little. . . .

TO THE SAME

Boston, Friday morning, March 9, 1839.

. . . The more I think of business the more really unhappy do I feel, and think more and more of studying law. In your letter you speak of my lecturing in Andover, about which I forgot to speak to you. Do they pay expenses? They gave me four dollars in Concord. I wish they'd take it into their heads to ask me at Cambridge, where they pay fifteen dollars, or in Lowell, where they pay twenty-five dollars!! What to do with myself I don't know. I'm afraid people will think

me a fool if I change again, and yet I can hardly hope ever to be satisfied where I am. I shouldn't wonder if next Monday saw me with "Kent's Commentaries" under my arm. I think I might get to take an interest in it, and then I should not fear at all about the living. . . .

I am certainly just at present in a miserable state, and I won't live so long.

TO THE SAME

Counting-Room, Boston, April 29, 1839.

. . . I don't know how it is, but I sometimes actually *need* to write somewhat in verse. . . .

On Sunday, my work-day in the *pottery* business, I scratched off a piece of rhyme on Allston's picture of Miriam and sent it to the *Advertiser*, in which, if it does not appear, it will be lost to the world, for part of it was only written on the sheet I sent, and the part that was written in pencil has lighted my lamp or cigar long since. It was scarcely half an hour's work, and therefore is rather an undecided [sort] of a production—written too fast to be either very bad or very good. There's some philosophy in that last remark. The piece on "Old Age" I think you will like. I am vain enough to suppose that, after the retouching I shall give it to-night, you can't help it. I trust I shall gradually get over the fault which belongs to all young writers, and which I should [describe] as having too many *thoughts* and too little *thought*. If a man builds his house on a rock it will stand; but if on a heap of little stones, mortar will hardly hold it up. . . . When will you come down to

visit the Allston Exhibition? If you are inclined to be critical in such matters, you must go alone. I can't stand it. Genius is to be admired and not criticised, and paintings must not (as is generally the case) be compared to our own conception, but with other paintings. What painter (excepting perhaps Raffaelle) ever came near his own conception or that of any other man?

TO THE SAME

Boston, May 9, 1839.

. . . The "Threnodia" has made its appearance in the *Knickerbocker*, and I shall, *ergo*, send on another piece or two shortly and solicit pay for the same. The "Threnodia" "is considered" the best piece in the number. I rather think that my brother Robert thought I wrote it, for when I was sitting in his room last night and he had been running down the pieces, he said that the Thren. was very "pretty," using a word which he thought would make my auctorial feelings roll me up into a literary hedgehog, or, in other words, raise my dander. But I coolly turned to the index, read every piece till I got to that, and then read off the page and turned to it very coolly as if I had never heard of it before, and put him off the scent. . . . R. animadverted on the irregular metre of the T., but, as I think, very unphilosophically and without much perception of the *true* rules of poetry. In my opinion no verse ought to be longer than the writer can sensibly make it. It has been this senseless stretching of verses to make them octo- or deka-syllabic or what not, that has brought such an abundance of useless epithets on the shoulders of poor English

verse. Methinks I see poor Poesy now with an epithet on either shoulder (like Robinson Crusoe's cats), cramming her fingers into her ears to shut out their prolonged caterwaul. Look at this, for instance,

> "And let thy *gentle* fingers fling
> Its *melting* murmurs o'er my ear."

That is not a very good instance either; I can't recall any just now, though, as I walked out of town yesterday, a great many came to my mind. I have not written a line since I wrote last to you, nor do I seem to have any call that way at present. I have many unfinished pieces which I must finish when I am in the mood. . . .

TO THE SAME

Boston, May 10, 1839.

I was agreeably surprised by the receipt of your letter this morning. I approve highly of your homily, and shall not [get] myself into such a scrape as poor Gil Blas did by attempting to criticise it. . . . The dew, mine ancient mentor, falleth not in the aisle of the temple made with hands, but visiteth every little green-clad blue-eyed worshipper on the hill-side or in the green-wood. Hath not Holy Writ taught us how that Enoch "walked with God"? And who are they that in our day walk in this holy wise? I fear me that those who walk unto the earthly temple walk with vanity, ostentation, and sinful lust oftentimes rather than with God.

> What is religion? 'Tis to go
> To church one day in seven,
> And think that *we*, of all men, know
> The only way to heaven.

But he that hath found, as the holy apostle did at Athens of the heathens, an altar to the unknown God in his heart, and who in a spirit of love and wonder offereth up acceptable offerings thereupon in the Temple of Nature, doth not he, of the twain, walk with God?

> "To him
> The morning stars are vocal as of old,
> And sing each day the birthday of a world,
> A world of love and beauty. Yea, old ocean
> Doth find a voice, and forests sing aloud."

In that fine old poet Herbert are as good arguments—the more pleasing for their quaintness—for church-going as are to be found anywhere. I remember one line of his which will be a good specimen. He says that even when you hear a dull preacher we should not go away uninstructed, for then

> "God takes a text and preaches patience."

I went last night to a concert given by the Brigade Band, and really heard some very fine music. They sometimes made a little too much noise for my taste, which is most decidedly for that sort of

> "Music that gentlier on the spirit lies
> Than tired eyelids over tired eyes"—

as Tennyson says, more beautifully than any poet I am acquainted with.

At Allston's gallery yesterday I saw something that drove me almost crazy with delight. You know how beauty always affects me. Well, yesterday I saw the most beautiful creature I ever set these eyes upon.

'Twere vain to attempt to describe her, and yet I must give you some faint idea of what sort of a creature she was. Her features were perfectly Jewish. Dark complexion, but one of those clear faces where every shade of feeling floats across like the shadow of a cloud across the grass. Eyes the largest and blackest and brightest and most spirit-like I ever dreamed of. Such eyes! They almost made me tremble. Across the room the outline of her eye was entirely merged in the shadows of her brows and the darkness of her complexion, so that you only saw a glory undefined and mysterious. Don't dream that I am in love with her, for I am "to one thing constant ever"—and I should never think of aught but distantly adoring such a seraphic loveliness. Perhaps from her darkness I should call her better a fallen seraph—in whose face was not darkness but "excess of glory obscured," as Milton beautifully says. She gave me more poetry than everything I have seen or thought this year. I must make her acquaintance, so that I may look into those two eyes. She is Southern, and is educating at Mr. Emerson's school to be a school-mistress. I doubt if she remains so long.

If I were to bless your vines, what think you would my slips of wild grape-vine say that I planted about a week ago? I should hear all around, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" What a passage in the Bible that is! I never could and never can read it without tears in my eyes. Esau was the favorite to my boyish mind, and is still. I had a fellow-feeling with him, for he was a careless, scatter-brained, uncalculating sort

of a fellow, in which respect some others are born into the world like him.

Your affectionate friend and jackass,

HUGH PERCEVAL.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, May 20, 1839.

Rejoice with me, for to-morrow I shall be free. Without saying a word to any one, I shall quietly proceed to Dane Law College to recitation. Now shall I be happy again as far as *that* is concerned.

. . . I am lazy enough and dilatory enough, Heaven knows, but not half so much so as some of my friends suppose. At all events, I was never made for a merchant, and I even begin to doubt whether I was made for anything in particular but to loiter through life. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, June 4, 1839.

. . . I begin to like the law. And therefore it is quite interesting. I am determined that I *will* like it and therefore I *do*. I don't know how to fill up this letter, and therefore will copy you a few thoughts which I threw into verse some time since, for of late I have had no call to write anything.

I

Must Love and Peace forever dwell apart,
Holding no friendly converse in *one* heart?
As two sweet notes that sound on different keys
Discord together, so, alas! do these.

2

TIME AN HUSBANDMAN

Strive not to hide the wrinkles on thy face.
They should but add to thee more reverend grace;
For noble fruits should follow where the plough
Of time has dug its furrows on thy brow.

3

Do all in place, and all is then aright.
Stars shun the day, but beautify the night.

4

CONSISTENCY

He is a fool who would thy faith deride
If youth's opinions change before life's close.
Doth not thy shade fall on a different side
When the sun sets than when his light first rose?

5

MIND'S PARADOX

If that in trifles I take much delight
Thou blamest me, thou doest not aright.
Who deemeth small things are beneath his state,
Will be too small for what is truly great.

6

The greatest truths may not be wholly true.
Who would have sunshine must have shadow too.

7

Look not on all unsteadiness with fear,
Nor idly wait till all things be made clear.
Stars twinkle from the grossness of thine atmosphere.

8

Strive not for fame, but wait beneath the tree,
And goodly fruitage will drop down to thee.
Who shakes the bough to get it on the hour,
Gets unripe fruit that turns his stomach sour.

9

On the *first* cause thy mind's eyes steadfast keep.
Reflected stars make shallow'st pools seem deep.

10

Error is not forever; hope for right.
Darkness is not the opposite of light,
But only absence—day will follow night.

11

OPINION

If thy bark groundeth with the ebbing tide,
Wait patiently the turning minds of men;
Opinion's wave full soon shall flow again,
And proudly on its waters thou shalt ride.

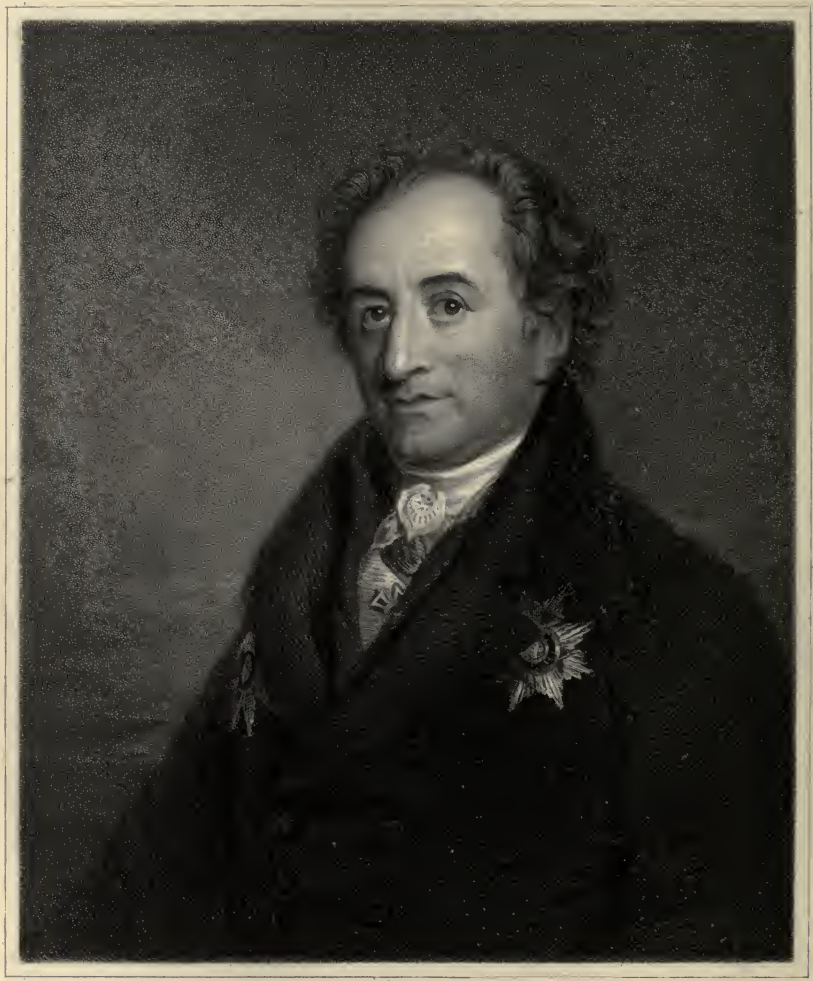
12

Two north-lights are there in the Soul that beam,
Truth's steady ray and Fancy's waving gleam.
One shines by day, the other blesseth night.
Scorn neither; though diverse, yet both are light.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, June 28, 1839.

. . . I found quite a treasure to-day—a small volume of about five hundred pages; not one of your attenuated modern things that seem like milk and water *watered*, but a goodly fat little fellow and full of the choicest



Engraved by J. Posselwhite.

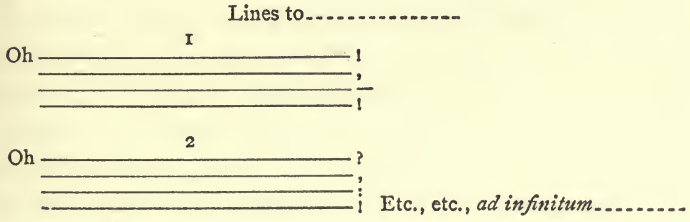
GOETHE.

From a Picture by George Dawe, Esqr. R.A.
in the possession of Henry Dawe Esqr.

dainties, viz., Hesiod, Theocritus, Bion, Moschus, and extracts from Orpheus and some forty others, all with a Latin translation *ad verbum*. There is some pleasure in reading such poets. How I do hate the modern cant about poetry and poets! Here is ———, "creep-mouse to ———," who will tell me that some nonsensical songs of Goethe's must be loved, because they set forth a feeling of his heart. As if a man should say, "Here's a beautiful little piece, one which must strike a 'responsive chord in every man's breast'," or some such silly cant as is in vogue nowadays, and then read some such song as this:

I am happy, fiddledede!
The happiest man you ever did see!
There's no one can so happy be!
Fiddledededido, fiddledede!

I am sure that, for my single self, I always am a fool when I am happy, and, if I said anything, should say sillier things than the above song. If men had no other way of showing their happiness than by printing it—as grasshoppers and crickets can only do it by chirping—it would be all very well. I am sure it would be much better if all our songs of joy were printed thus, and I have long thought so, viz.,



I am very sorry for the fate of the piece I sent to the *Knickerbocker*, for I have no other full copy of it and it was really worth saving. If I could get any bookseller to do it for me, I would publish a volume of poems. Of late a fancy has seized me for so doing. If it met with any commendation I could get paid for contributions to periodicals. I tried last night to write a little rhyme—but must wait for the moving of the waters. The nine goddess virgins who dance with tender feet round the violet-hued fountain of Hippocrene, and whose immortal voices drop sweetly from their lips, will not come to me. . . .

Now I must stop and hear my pupil recite.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, July 22, 1839.

. . . If I live, I don't believe I shall ever (*between you and me*) practise law. I intend, however, to study it and prepare myself for practising. But a blind presentiment of becoming independent in some other way is always hovering round me. Above all things should I love to be able to sit down and do something literary for the rest of my natural life. If I don't marry—and I hardly think I shall—it will take but little to support me, and when I wanted a decent dinner I could go to one of my opulent friends—Dr. Loring, or some other. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Aug. 4, 1839.

. . . Since I talked with you when you were here I have wondered whether you believed in the divine in-

spiration of the old Hebrew prophets. Do you? I don't. I once thought it an argument in their favor that, in all the world, there has not, before or since, been any writing that compared with theirs in *poetic* sublimity. Now that I am older, this very thing seems to me against them. I think that if you compare it with that of our Saviour (whose inspiration I would be more willing to admit), you will perceive my meaning. *His*, you will notice, is prose; *theirs* poetic sublimity—and herein lies the difference between *inspiration*, or *perception* of *real* truth, and *enthusiasm*, or *longing after ideal truth.*

* * * * *

George, before I die your heart shall be gladdened by seeing your wayward, vain, and too often selfish friend do something that shall make his name honored. As Sheridan once said, "It's *in* me, and" (we'll skip the oath) "it shall come *out!*"

TO C. U. SKATES

Cambridge, Sept., 1839.

My dear Charles,—I am glad to see a more punctual answer to my last epistle than has heretofore been your wont. I sit down to answer your last with Time's warning finger pointing nigh upon the dead waste and middle of the night. Business first. Do you suppose that a package put on board the Charleston packet and directed to you as usual would come to hand? For if I happen to have some cash anywhere within a reasonable time, I intend to cheer your exile by sending you the third and fourth volumes of Carlyle's "Miscellanies," which have been published here.

I should love to be with you listening to the melancholy voice of your friends (remember me to them) the breakers. Here I have no such company. But the wind that comes from the sea has not forgotten their voices, and sings fine songs for me through the branches of the pine-grove under my window.

I begin to like the law; but I shall let my fate be governed by circumstance and influence. There are those who would have a man *act out himself;* it is very much a dispute about words. For is not this acting out ourselves, a man giving its due weight to every influence? A man should not only regard what is *in* him, but also what is *without* acting on that within. Evermore are these little circumstances busily at work building up their tiny coral stems in the heaving ocean of time, round which the ever-floating driftwood of opinion shall cling, till, in the next cycle, they become green islands, the abode of men like ourselves. Oh, for an hour's talk and smoke with you! I have so much to say that would stare at you cold and meaningless from paper. But smoking is not what it once was. Weep with me, friend of my bosom, on the degeneracy of cigars! Man and cigars decline together. Synopsis as follows: Chap. 1st. General view, with an attempt to trace the fate of man to some connection with the subject—probability of success from the fact that all inquiries into the matter end in smoke. Chap. 2d shows that as cigars grow to draw less easily, so it is with men who grow restive in drawing the Car of State; hence we may account for the French Revolution. Chap. 3d. The filling of cigars now belies the wrapper. So with men: they have a very well-

seeming outside of learning or ideas, but are not so well filled as of yore; if we look deep we will find but cabbage leaves, etc., etc.

Your letters and crabbed characters bring back many thronging recollections to me. Do you remember that night, most of which we spent in the burying-ground striving to raise ghosts? Truly, life were undesirable if we had not the power of looking behind as well as before us—and Pluto imposed hard conditions on Orpheus in that he forbade him to do so. Mournfully as [echoed] the *far-heard* backward footsteps of Eurydice, do those of departing memories echo through the chambers of our hearts.

* * * * *

Write soon and remember your ever

Affectionate friend,

J. R. Lowell.

TO G. B. LORING

Cambridge, Sept. 18, 1839.

. . . Among other plans that have been fermenting in my brain is one of writing a tale founded on the idea of a man's having the power given him of seeing into the minds of other men and women, as Asmodeus did into their houses. Whether it will ever come to anything I know not. Another plan I have is that of writing a series of communications for some periodicals, in the form of Eckermann and Boswell:—imaginary conversations with an imaginary great man, in which I can put down anything and everything of worth that occurs to me in the course of the day.

There is a camp-meeting in operation over at Brook-

line, on the borders of the lake. Truly a glorious place to make men worship God—perhaps even without the aid of a camp-meeting! I rode by the place last night, and what do you think I saw? An empty reed shaken by the wind of hypocrisy or fanaticism? No! a party of eight or ten gamblers busily employed round a little table beneath the trees by the light of lamps or lanterns—a scene worthy of Rembrandt, who painted with a brush dipped in darkness, with a gleam as of hell-fire cast on his canvas by way of light. Well, whatever others were doing, this little band were toiling in their vocation. Truly, the good old Latimer was right when he said, in his honest way, that the devil was the faithfullest of bishops, going up and down continually in his diocese, and distraining for rent when his parishioners were on their death-beds, and that not for *tithes* merely, but for the whole of his debtor's eternal substance. His diocesans, too, are no whit less zealous than he. I entertain a high respect for you, O Sathanas! Ten like thee would have saved Sodom and Gomorrah, hapless cities of the plain!

> "I'm laith to think o' yon grim den,
> E'en for your sake!"

Verily, I see you now in the shape of a great black bell-wether, leading the sheep away from the fold and the good Shepherd. And are you looking over my shoulder even at this moment, auld Hornie? I doubt. For methinks such a heavenly moon and quiet stars as these were enough to drive Sin back to hell again, or at least to give you some such pang as [you felt] when the rapt Milton, sitting on the bank of

"Siloah's brook,
That flowed fast by the oracle of God,"

saw you looking at the happy dwellers in Eden. Ah, my old boy, stick your nose into my business, and you'll be [sorry] that St. Dunstan's fiery tongs left anything for me to grasp! J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Bate Court, Dec. 2, 1839.

. . . I went up to Watertown on Saturday with W. A. White, and spent the Sabbath with him. You ought to see his father! The most perfect specimen of a bluff, honest, hospitable country squire you can possibly imagine. His mother, too, is a very pleasant woman—a sister of Mrs. Gilman. His sister* is a very pleasant and pleasing young lady, and knows more poetry than any one I am acquainted with. I mean, she is able to repeat more. She is more familiar, however, with modern poets than with the pure wellsprings of English poesy.

* Miss Maria White, afterwards Mrs. Lowell.

II

1840–1849

ENGAGEMENT TO MISS WHITE.—LAW AND LETTERS.—WRITING FOR THE MAGAZINES.—"A YEAR'S LIFE."—THE *PIONEER*. —"POEMS."—"CONVERSATIONS ON SOME OF THE OLD POETS."—MARRIAGE.—CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PENNSYLVANIA *FREEMAN*.—THE *ANTI-SLAVERY STANDARD*.—"THE BIGLOW PAPERS."—THE "FABLE FOR CRITICS."—"SIR LAUNFAL."

LETTERS TO GEORGE B. LORING, WILLIAM A. WHITE, CHARLES F. BRIGGS, MISS L. L. WHITE, H. W. LONGFELLOW, EDWARD M. DAVIS, SYDNEY H. GAY, CHARLES R. LOWELL, JAMES T. FIELDS, MRS. FRANCIS G. SHAW.

IN the summer of 1840 Lowell finished his studies at the Harvard Law School and received the degree of Bachelor of Laws. His profession had become of unexpected importance to him, for owing to a misfortune, by which the greater part of his father's personal property had been swept away, he had now to depend on his own exertions for a livelihood. Moreover, in the autumn of this year he became engaged to Miss Maria White, with the prospect of marriage indefinitely postponed until he should be able to support a wife. His love not only made him happy; it also confirmed all that was best in his nature, quickening his powers into full activity, and rapidly developing his character. Miss White was a woman of unusual loveliness, and of gifts of mind and

heart still more unusual, which enabled her to enter with complete sympathy into her lover's intellectual life and to direct his genius to its highest aims. Younger in years than he, she was more mature in feeling, more disciplined in character, and to her Lowell owed all that a man may owe to the woman whom he loves. She, too, was a poet, and her poetry was the simple expression of tender feeling and sympathetic perceptions, and occasionally of delicate but genuine imaginative faculty. She possessed also, in large measure, the culture and the moral enthusiasm which were characteristic of many of the best New England women of the time.

For a year or two now Lowell had been a frequent contributor of verse, under his own name or under the pseudonym of Hugh Perceval, to the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, the *Southern Literary Messenger*, and other periodicals. Much of it was crude and tentative, but some of it displayed an acquaintance with nature and a spirit of vigorous individuality rare in the verse of youth, and giving assurance of better things to come. He was already acquiring reputation as a poet of promise, and in the autumn of this year he determined to collect his poems for publication in a volume to be called "A Year's Life." It was scarcely a judicious venture for a young man just about to enter on the practice of law, and to whom the repute of being devoted to his profession was important. But the true interests of his intelligence were not to be sacrificed to prudential considerations. He cared more for poetry than for law or for money. The little volume contained, amid much of inferior worth, poems which at once gave Lowell the highest

place among the younger American poets; and the reader of the "Earlier Poems" in his collected works will find in them the accordant prelude of the fuller tones of coming years.

For the next year or two literature occupied him more than law, and in the autumn of 1842, in the hope of bettering his fortune, he undertook to start a periodical, a monthly journal, with the assistance of his friend Mr. Robert Carter as managing editor. Mr. Carter was a man of varied talents and acquisitions, but with little more genius for money-making than his co-editor. The *Pioneer*, as the magazine was called, had a short life of three months, and left its luckless projectors burdened with a considerable debt.

The greater part of the winter of 1842–43 was spent by Lowell in New York, under treatment for his eyes, which had been giving him trouble. Boston and New York were then far more widely separated in time, and perhaps also in spirit, than at present, and the long stay in the larger city was an experience of value to the young poet. It brought him into relations with a new set of men, especially men of letters of his own generation. He saw much of Page, the painter, who was already his friend; and he formed a friendship, which soon became intimate, with Mr. Charles F. Briggs, who, like himself, was seeking a precarious support from literature, and was one of the most active contributors to the magazines of the day. Mr. Briggs was born in Nantucket, and retained through life a humor racy of his native island. He had had an adventurous youth, but he had now, for some time, been acquiring reputation as a

writer of novels, short tales, and essays. A few years later Lowell described him in "A Fable for Critics," under the name of the hero of one of his novels:

"There comes Harry Franco, and, as he draws near,
You find that's a smile which you took for a sneer;
One half of him contradicts t' other; his wont
Is to say very sharp things and do very blunt;
His manner's as hard as his feelings are tender,
And a *sortie* he'll make when he means to surrender;
He's in joke half the time when he seems to be sternest,
When he seems to be joking, be sure he's in earnest;
He has common sense in a way that's uncommon,
Hates humbug and cant, loves his friends like a woman,
Builds his dislikes of cards and his friendships of oak,
Loves a prejudice better than aught but a joke;
Is half upright Quaker, half downright Comeouter;
Loves Freedom too well to go stark mad about her;
Quite artless himself, is a lover of Art,
Shuts you out of his secrets and into his heart,
And though not a poet, yet all must admire
In his letters of Pinto his skill on the liar."

In December, 1843, Lowell published his second volume of "Poems," dedicating it to his friend William Page. It contained the best of what he had written since "A Year's Life" appeared, and gave evidence of the rapid ripening of his powers. But they were not yet at their full. The volume added to his reputation, and made it clear that his life was to be given to literature rather than to law. In the course of the next year he was busy with a series of interesting and discursive essays, under the title of "Conversations on Some of the Old Poets," and at the end of the year they

were published in a volume which has never since been reprinted. The poets who served for the main subject of his discourse were Chaucer, Chapman, Ford, and other old dramatists. The book shows his moral no less than his intellectual growth. It is full of the poetic ardor of youth, and of its moral enthusiasm. The criticism is sympathetic and of wide range, and the style already manifests those qualities which were in time to win for its writer a place among the masters of English prose. But the book is the work of a reformer and a radical quite as much as of a literary critic. It has the lavishness of a genius conscious of its large powers and possessions, together with the earnestness of a character deepened by love, and attaining through it a serious sense of the duties and claims of life.

Although the income which he could derive from his writing was small and precarious, it seemed sufficient for modest needs, and at the end of December, 1844, he was married. His wife's health was delicate, and, for the sake of the milder climate, they at once, upon their marriage, went to Philadelphia, where they spent the winter in lodgings. Lowell was engaged as a regular contributor to the Pennsylvania *Freeman*, an anti-slavery weekly paper, once edited by Whittier, but then in charge of Mr. James Miller McKim, a man of intelligence and character, with whom it was a pleasure to be associated, and for whom Lowell entertained a high respect and warm regard.

Returning to Elmwood in June, the following months were spent peacefully and happily at home. On the last day of the year a new joy came to him in the birth

of a daughter. Early in the summer of 1846 he made an engagement to write regularly for the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, published in New York, the organ of the American Anti-Slavery Society. The paper was then edited with great ability by Mr. Sidney Howard Gay; but the editor was more or less under the control of a committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, who at times made his chair an uneasy seat. It was arranged that Lowell was to receive a salary of five hundred dollars a year for a weekly contribution of prose or verse. These terms were modified after the first year, but his connection with the paper lasted till the spring of 1850, nearly four years. The conditions of the time were grave, the events stirring, and Lowell, deeply moved by the steady and relentless progress of the slave-power, poured himself out from week to week in a succession of poems and articles in prose of rare vigor and effect. Many of the poems which he contributed to the *Standard* were at once widely circulated, and attained a popularity which they have never lost. Hosea Biglow and Parson Wilbur transferred their contributions from the Boston *Courier* to the *Standard*, and became widely known. Here first appeared the noble poem to Garrison and that to John G. Palfrey, the fine stanzas to Freedom, and others of the same order; but together with the poems expressly directed against slavery appeared others of different nature and tone, in which the poet spoke more as poet and less as citizen—poems which revealed his inner life, such as "Eurydice," "The Parting of the Ways," "Beaver Brook," and "The First Snow-Fall."

The last of these is the record of the sorrow which had come to him in the death of his little daughter Blanche, in March, 1847, and of tremulous happiness renewed in the birth of a second daughter in the autumn of the same year.

The wide range of Lowell's powers and his extraordinary intellectual facility were never shown more fully than in 1848. In this year the first series of "The Biglow Papers," with its delightful introductory matter, was collected and issued in a volume, while the "Fable for Critics" and "Sir Launfal" were written and published.

TO G. B. LORING

Bate Court, April 22, 1840.

. . . I am at present engaged in the funniest job that ever fell to my lot. I have written (at his earnest and most unescapable urging) some damnable verses for a North Carolina lover to send home to his mistress, who has once refused him! To come to me to plead a cause which I never could gain for myself! Of course the lines are miserable stuff. How *could* I write them? But there was no getting off. They employed my energies in writing and copying not quite an hour, and are now lying under this sheet as I write. They'd *lie* most damnably wherever they were. Ten as pretty nonsense verses as ever lover writ upon his mistress's eyebrow (Shakespeare says "mistress' eyebrow," but he's wrong). Here is a sample—

"The hopes that I cherished,
Alas, they are gone!
In the budding they perished,
And I am alone!"

The man for whom I wrote them is, however, as noble hearted a fellow as ever trod. . . .

. . . By the way, I find quite a difference between this and my college life. I am become quite a popular man, and that without money to spend or going a step out of my way to any one. I am on the best of terms with "Southerners," "Westerners," and "Easterners." If I ever travel through the country it will be of use to me. We have a fine set of men here now. . . .

3.30 P.M.—W—— has just left my room tickled half to death with the stuff. He swears if he gets his Dulcinea that he'll "have me on to the wedding, expenses paid and everything else!" . . .

Yours, J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Bate Court, May 17, 1840.

. . . I spent last evening at Watertown. Maria White (I can't call her miss) *is* beautiful—so pure and spirit-like. To make a bull—she seems half of earth and *more* than half of Heaven. You ought to see her. I had a time, I tell you—and made a fool of myself to boot.

My head aches horribly or I should write better. God bless you.

TO THE SAME

June 3, 1840.

Thank Heaven! whatsoe'er the rate is
At which some other things are sold,
Nature is ever had "free gratis,
Children half-price," as 'twas of old. . . .

TO THE SAME

Bate Court, Aug. 25, 1840.

. . . I am going to write a tragedy. I have the plot nearly filled out. I think—I *know* it will be good. It will be psycho-historical. I think also of writing a prose tale, which perhaps will appear in chapters in the *Messenger**—if White will pay me. Goethe wrote his "Sorrows of the Young Werther," and I will mine. Alas! the young soul is full of sorrows at that time, when it only sees written over the gate of life, "Per me si va in eterno dolore," and has not yet found that, as the God-man "descended into hell, and rose the third day," so for us this gate leads also to heaven. If I don't die, George, you will be proud of me. I *will* DO somewhat.

They tell me I must study law.
They say that I have dreamed, and dreamed too long;
  That I must rouse and seek for fame and gold;
That I must scorn this idle gift of song,
  And mingle with the vain and proud and cold.
    Is, then, this petty strife
    The end and aim of life,
All that is worth the living for below?
O God! then call me hence, for I would gladly go! . . .

TO THE SAME

Cambridge, Nov. 24, 1840.

I shall print my volume. Maria wishes me to do it, and that is enough. I had become tired of the thought

* The *Southern Literary Messenger*, published at Richmond, Va., for many years the chief literary periodical of the Southern States. Its editor was Mr. Thomas W. White.

of it. . . . "Irene" has gathered good opinions from many. I am beginning to be a lion.

TO THE SAME

Jan. 2, 1841.

. . . I know that God has given me powers such as are not given to all, and I will not "hide my talent in mean clay." I do not care what others may think of me or of my book, because if I *am* worth anything I shall one day show it. I do not fear criticism so much as I love truth. Nay, I do not fear it at all. In short, I am *happy*. Maria *fills* my ideal and I satisfy hers. And I mean to live as one beloved by such a woman should live. She is every way noble. People have called "Irene" a beautiful piece of poetry. And so it is. It owes all its beauty to her. . . .

TO THE SAME

Boston, Feb. 18, 1841.

. . . My book, as you must know, is out. It has been received with distinguished favor, but as yet only two hundred and twenty-five copies have sold. I am to be reviewed in the next *North American*. . . .

TO THE SAME

Sunday, March 14, 1841.

. . . My book does as well as can be expected. All the notices of it have been very favorable except that of your honest friend and fellow-politician the editor of the *Post*, who blackguarded me roundly.

The *Post* has blackguarded my book!
But, then, 'tis understood
That his most usual course he took—
To sneer at all that's good.

Monday, ½ past 10.

I have just finished something which I ought to have done long ago. I have copied off a ballad of mine for a publisher of the name of D. H. Williams, who is getting out an annual. He will pay me five dollars per page, and more if the book sells well. Hawthorne, Emerson, and Longfellow are writing for it, and Bryant and Halleck have promised to—so that I shall be in good company, which will be pleasing to groundlings.

Three hundred copies of my book have sold. A new periodical in New York, *Arcturus** by name, which is as transcendental as Gotham *can* be, has given me a *very* pleasant notice, premising that they know nothing of the author but that he has written that book.

I am in Chas. G. Loring's office—and am getting quite in love with the law. . . .

Since I have been in Boston, and in the office, I have written the best sonnets I have yet written, and one of the best (if not the best) lyrics, which last, as well as the ballad, I mean to print in the annual as aforesaid.

I am glad of this, because I feared that the law would cover all the sunny greensward of my soul with its dust. But Maria will hinder all that.

* "A Journal of Books and Opinions," edited by Evert A. Duyckinck and Cornelius Matthews, writers of some note in their day, but both alike, after striving years, fallen into the pleasant peace of oblivion.

TO W. A. WHITE

39 Court Street,
Boston, Nov. 2, 1841.

My dear W.,— . . . The magazine* is published this morning (Tuesday, November second, in the year of grace one thousand eight hundred and forty-one), and notices are forthcoming in the daily journals. The "respectable" *Daily*† has a puff this morning which I have not seen. The covers are changed to a brownish free-stone color. The figure on the cover with wings, etc., is intended, saith the artist, to portray the Genius of Literature. But how any man in his senses could set forth such a fat, comfortable-looking fellow as the *vera effigies* of what is hungriest, leanest, empty-pursiest, and without-a-centiest on earth I am at a loss to say. John King says he considers it as a flat number—but I think it is very tolerable, considering that it has not yet got under way. I am going to write some criticisms on the Old Dramatists for some of the future numbers, which will be a cheap and convenient way of reprinting the best scenes and passages. . . .

TO THE SAME

Boston, Dec. 9, 1841.

My dear Will,— . . . I have not been idle. I have

* This was the *Boston Miscellany*, a monthly journal, edited by Nathan Hale, Jr. Mr. Hale was a man of marked ability; he was a college friend and classmate of Lowell. The *Miscellany* was an ambitious attempt, and failed in the course of its second year of existence. It is now sought for by collectors, because it contains contributions by Hawthorne, Poe, Parsons, and Lowell, besides those of many less eminent writers who are not yet wholly forgotten. Lowell's papers on the "Old Dramatists" have an interest as showing his early taste for and study of authors who were his familiars through life, and who were the subject of his latest writing in prose.

† The *Daily Advertiser*, the chief newspaper in Boston at that time.

written some very fine sonnets, some of which, if you have the luck to encounter such periodicals as *Arcturus*, the *Miscellany*, or *Graham's Mag.*, will delight your eager vision—a vision than which I only know *one* superior. . . . I have just come from spending the evening at ——'s (where Maria is making sunshine just now), and have been exceedingly funny. I have, in the course of the evening, recited near upon five hundred extempore macaronic verses; composed and executed an oratorio and opera (entirely unassisted and, *à la* Beethoven, on a piano without any strings, to wit: the centre-table); besides drawing an entirely original view of Nantasket Beach, with the different groups from Worrick's disporting themselves thereon, and a distant view of the shipping in the harbor, compiled from the ship-news of our indefatigable friend Ballard, of the *Daily*, and making a temperance address; giving vent, moreover, to innumerable jests, jokes, puns, oddities, quiddities, and nothings, interrupted by mine own laughter and that of my hearers; and eating an indefinite number of raisins, chesnuts (I advisedly omit the "t"), etc., etc., etc., etc., etc., etc., etc., etc., etc. . . .

TO G. B. LORING

Boston, April 11, 1842.

. . . I agree with you that, if possible, it would be best for you to settle yourself as near Boston as may be. It is always disagreeable for a man of education to be pitched into the midst of a set of barbarians. If you ever get into full practice, you will often be too weary

to find solace among your books, and when you look around for the instructive companionship and quiet conversation of men of letters, you feel your loneliness very bitterly. Near the city you can almost always find a few men in every town who have kept aloof from the general scramble, and found a truer wealth in the hearts of the old poets and philosophers which lie embalmed in their undying works. You say that life seems to be a struggle after nothing in particular. But you are wrong. It is a struggle after the peaceful home of the soul in a natural and loving state of life. Men are mostly unconscious of the object of their struggle, but it is always connected in some way with this. If they gain wealth and power or glory it is all to *make up for this* want, which they *feel*, but scarce know what it is. But nothing will ever supply the place of this, any more than their softest carpets will give their old age the spring and ease which arose from the pliant muscles of youth. . . .

TO THE SAME

April 20, 1842.

. . . The next number of the *Democratic Magazine* will contain five sonnets of mine, suggested by Wordsworth's sonnets in favor of capital punishment. They are very good—some lines in them are perhaps better than anything of the kind I have written. I shall have three sonnets in the May number of *Arcturus;* and a sonnet, a little poem written in 1840, a sketch in prose called "My First Client," and article number two on the "Old Dramatists," with my name [in the *Boston Miscellany*]. In *Graham* I shall unfortunately have nothing.

I have lost two months by not sending early enough. There was twenty dollars lost outright.

TO THE SAME

May 11, 1842.

I should have answered your letter before, but that I have been very busy reading and writing for my third article on the "Old English Dramatists." But I have determined not to try to finish it for the June, but to print it in the July, number of the *Miscellany*. The first two have been received with great favor — *very* great. . . . All this is pleasant to me, because it seems to increase my hope of being able one day to support myself by my pen, and to leave a calling which I hate, and for which I am not *well* fitted, to say the least.

I mean to make the third article better than either of the others. The task of selection is the hardest part of it. I suppose I must have marked more than a thousand passages in Massinger's plays, some of them quite long, and of these I can, of course, only extract a very small number. This is especially true in the case of Massinger, who has not so many *strikingly* fine passages as many of the other dramatists, and yet has many of about the same merit. . . .

I shall be glad to see your articles against the slavery correspondent of the *Post*. If men will not set their faces against this monstrous sin, this choragus of all other enormities, they, at least, need not smile upon it, much less write in its favor. What, in the name of God, are all these paltry parties, which lead men by the nose against all that is best and holiest, to the freedom of five

millions of men? The horror of slavery can only be appreciated by one who has felt it himself, or who has imagination enough to put himself in the place of the slave, and fancy himself not only virtually imprisoned, but forced to toil, and all this for no crime and for no reason except that it would be *inconvenient* to free them. What if the curse of slavery were entailed upon them by their ancestors, does this in the least affect the clear question of right and wrong? If this be so, then no barbarian can be ever reformed. But, thank God, it is not so. This is only the excuse which a pandering conscience, a terrified love of gain, invent for the slaveholders, and in which we Northern freemen sustain and encourage them. Are the slaves to be forever slaves because our ancestors committed a horrible crime and wrong in making them so? Only think for a moment on the miserable and outrageous lie and fallacy here. . . .

TO THE SAME

July 6, 1842.

. . . We have been having temperance celebrations down here at a great rate, and some in which I have had a particular personal interest. Last Friday Maria presented a banner to the Watertown Washington Total Abstinence Society in the name of the women of Watertown. There were more than a thousand persons present. The meeting was held on a beautifully wooded hill belonging to Mr. White. The day was as fine as could have been wished. Maria looked—I never saw any woman look so grand. She was dressed in snowy white, with a wreath of oak-leaves and water-lilies round her head, and a water-lily in her bosom. There were a

great many tears in a great many eyes when she presented the banner. She did it as might have been expected. She said a few words in clear, silvery tones. She told them that the banner came from their mothers and sisters, their daughters and wives, and they must hold it sacred. The motto on the banner was excellent. It was this verse from the Bible: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." The next day Joe Bird (one of the musical ones), a great brown-faced, hard-handed giant of a farmer, overtook me and carried me part of the way into town in his wagon. He said: "I s'pose it's superfluous to tell *you* of it, but I never saw such a face as Miss Maria White's in my life. There's something supernatural about it. I dunnow what to call it but heavenly and angelic. When she smiles, it don't seem as though she smiled, but as if an actual lustre shone out of all her face. I love my wife as much as I know how, and always shall till I die; but, her to the contrary notwithstanding, I must say I never saw a face that came anywhere's near Miss Maria's. When she was presenting the banner I couldn't help crying, I tell you." I could have hugged the great brawny, honest-hearted fellow.

On the 4th I attended, by invitation, the celebration of the Cambridgeport W. T. A. Society. We dined in a fine large pavilion, which proved, however, quite too small for the multitude. So the children were fed first, and then we sat down. There were more than three thousand in all, it was said. I was called out, and made a speech of about ten minutes from the top of a bench to an audience of two thousand, as silent as could be.

I spoke of the beauty of having women present, and of their influence and interest in reforms. I ended with the following sentiment, "The proper place of woman—at the head of the pilgrims back to purity and truth." In the midst of my speech I heard many demonstrations of satisfaction and approval—one voice saying "Good!" in quite an audible tone. I was told that my remarks were "just the thing." When I got up and saw the crowd it inspired me. I felt as calm as I do now, and could have spoken an hour with ease. I did not hesitate for a word or expression even once. . . .

TO THE SAME

Boston, Sept. 20, 1842.

. . . I am very happy. In the first place, I have Maria; in the second, I am growing slowly into favor as a poet; in the third, I have quite a reasonable prospect of getting into a lucrative literary employment next year, and the last cause of joy I will detail more at length. I have got a clue to a whole system of spiritual philosophy. I had a revelation last Friday evening. I was at Mary's, and happening to say something of the presence of spirits (of whom, I said, I was often dimly aware), Mr. Putnam entered into an argument with me on spiritual matters. As I was speaking the whole system rose up before me like a vague Destiny looming from the abyss. I never before so clearly felt the spirit of God in me and around me. The whole room seemed to me full of God. The air seemed to waver to and fro with the presence of Something I knew not what. I spoke with the calmness and clearness of a prophet.

I cannot yet tell you what this revelation was. I have not yet studied it enough. But I shall perfect it one day, and then you shall hear it and acknowledge its grandeur. It embraces all other systems.

Nor am I at liberty yet to tell you my plan of literary support. If I could see you, I would tell it you by word of mouth, but I cannot bring myself to write it down. Apart from this, I think I may safely reckon on earning four hundred dollars by my pen the next year, which will support me. Between this and June, 1843, I think I shall have freed myself of debt and become an independent man. I am to have fifteen dollars a poem from the *Miscellany*, ten dollars from *Graham*, and I have made an arrangement with the editor of the *Democratic Review*, by which I shall probably get ten or fifteen dollars more. Prospects are brightening, you see. I am going to write an article on Marvell for the *Democratic Review*, and shall have a poem (a good one, too) in the October number.

TO THE SAME

Boston, Nov. 30, 1842.

I do not write letters to *anybody*—the longer I live the more irksome does letter-writing become to me. When we are young we need such a vent for our feelings. Unable to find a friend in the spiritual world, we feel more keenly the necessity of one in the material to whom we may pour out the longings that oppress us. But, as we grow older and find more ease of expression, especially if it be in a way by which we can reach the general ear and heart, these private utterances become less and less needful to us.

But, dear George, I have been harassed more than you can well think with the *business* of my magazine. I have staked all my present hope upon this one throw of the dice, and you may suppose that I have not felt at leisure enough to write.

I have an article to write for my magazine of six or seven pages which requires care and toil, and I have but a day or two left to finish it in—and it is but begun. It is on the plays of Middleton, and *ought* to be interesting.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, June 15, 1843.

. . . I have been very happy for the last day or two in writing a long poem in blank verse on Prometheus, the Greek archetype of St. Simeon Stylites, the first reformer and locofoco* of the Greek Mythology. It will be quite worth your while to read it when it is printed. I hope to see it in the July number of the *Democratic Review*, but fear it was too late, having only been sent on this morning. It is the longest and best poem I have ever written, and overrunning with true radicalism and antislavery. I think that it will open the eyes of some folk and make them *think* that I am a poet, whatever they may say.

I am now at work on a still longer poem in the *ottava rima*, to be the first in my forthcoming volume. I feel more and more assured every day that I shall yet do something that will keep my name (and perhaps my

* The popular designation for some years of a portion of the Democratic Party in the United States; hence, used for a Democrat.

body) alive. My wings were never so light and strong as now. So hurrah for a niche and a laurel! I have set about making myself ambitious. It is the only way to climb well. Men yield more readily to an ambitious man, provided he can bear it out by deeds. Just as much as we claim the world gives us, and posterity has enough to do in nailing the base coin to the counter. But I only mean to use my ambition as a staff to my love of freedom and man. I *will* have power, and there's the end of it. I have a right to it, too, and you see I have put the crown on already. . . .

TO CHARLES F. BRIGGS

Cambridge, Aug. 9, 1843.

. . . My " Prometheus " has not received a single public notice yet, though I think it the best thing I have done, and though I have been puffed to repletion for poems without a tithe of its merit. Your letter was the first sympathy I received. Although such great names as Goethe, Byron, and Shelley have all handled the subject in modern times, you will find that I have looked at it from a somewhat new point of view. I have made it *radical*, and I believe that no poet in this age can write much that is good unless he give himself up to this tendency. For radicalism has now for the first time taken a distinctive and acknowledged shape of its own. So much of its spirit as poets in former ages have attained (and from their purer organization they could not fail of some) was by instinct rather than by reason. It has never till now been seen to be one of the two great wings that upbear the universe.

I have sent another poem to O'Sullivan,* still more radical than "Prometheus," and in some respects better, though, from its subject, incapable of so high a strain as that. . . . The proof of poetry is, in my mind, that it reduce to the essence of a single line the vague philosophy which is floating in all men's minds, and so render it portable and useful and ready to the hand. Is it not so? At least, no poem ever makes me respect its author which does not in some way convey a truth of philosophy. When Shakespeare says, "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin," he has saved the need of a thousand volumes of metaphysics. And the beauty of it is that what a true poet says always *proves itself* to our minds, and we cannot dodge it or get away from it. I say this to show you (since you take an interest in me) what my *aspiration* is. It will be years before I get near it.

Besides writing poems, I have raised the finest chickens in the neighborhood, and I advise you to get a few at Staten Island, if it were only that there is no sound so full of right-down country cheer as the crowing of that lusty bird the cock. If I can I shall see you this summer, but I am deeply in debt for the *Pioneer*, and feel a twinge for every cent I spend. Give my best love to Page, and tell him that unless he has some good reason for keeping my portrait, there are a great many who wish it back—especially *one*, who also sends her love to both of you. . . .

* The editor of the *Democratic Review*.

TO W. A. WHITE

Elmwood, Sept. 19, 1843.

. . . Do not attack the Liberty Party too fiercely. I think myself that they are mistaken in many things. But one should remember that *they are only in error as to the best means of bringing about the Right*, and surely deserve more sympathy at our hands than those whose Creed is *wrong*. I happen myself to know personally some very honest and very good men in that party, and belonging, as I do, neither to the old nor the new organization, I can the more easily form an unbiassed opinion. Moreover, I would be very cautious of abusing the clergy. To most men's ears this sounds like an attack on the *religious sentiment* itself, for the clergyman nowadays, to many a disciple of the cropt Genevan, stands instead of the images and pictures of old Rome. Show that they are *mistaken* as much and as often as you please; but be slow to charge any man, and especially any body of men, with want of principle. I remember when my own eyes were as blind as an owl's to the Sun of Truth, and I learned charity to the blindness of others in the best school. One word more. Be *most* careful in stating facts. If an adversary can show one misstatement (however small) in your argument, he has already confuted you in the most effectual manner to nine tenths of those you are striving to convince.

The doctrine of Fourier seems to be attracting a good deal of attention in Boston just now. Brisbane and Greeley have both lectured there, and, as far as I can judge, with considerable success. Brisbane has begun

a series of articles on the subject in the *Courier*. To me it is a very interesting one. There is a great deal of sound philosophy mixed up with much wild deduction in it. At least we ought to give a respectful hearing to anything that earnestly proposes to make man more aware of his high destiny, and to show him the plainest road thereto. . . .

I am in treaty with Owen to publish a volume for me. He is a little afraid of the "speculation," but is very desirous to publish it, and will probably do so. . . .

I made a short trip down to Bangor the other day, and picked up a great deal of all sorts of things. I met an Ohio abolitionist on board the boat going down, who told me of his stumping a clergyman in a very neat manner. You might use it in one of your speeches. "Says he to me, 'I'm an abolitionist,' says he, 'but then if you set the niggers free they won't work.' Says I, 'You jist take a little walk with me, will ye?' It was aboard the boat, you see, so he says, 'Yes,' and we walks along, and bimeby we met one o' these 'ere black fellers a-carryin' a waiter. 'That 'ere feller's black, ain't he?' says I. 'Yes,' says he, 'sartin—black as the crown o' my hat.' 'Wal,' says I, 'he's to work, ain't he?' 'Yes,' says he agin, 'sartin he is.' So we walks on, and pooty soon I see another on 'em emptyin' slops overboard. 'Ain't that feller black?' says I. 'O' course he is,' says he. 'Wal,' says I, '*he's* to work, ain't he?' 'Sartin,' says he, lookin' as though he knowed what was comin'. So by that we'd got to the kitchen door, and I opened it, and there was six or eight on 'em tight at it. 'Ain't them fellers black?' says I—wal, they stand

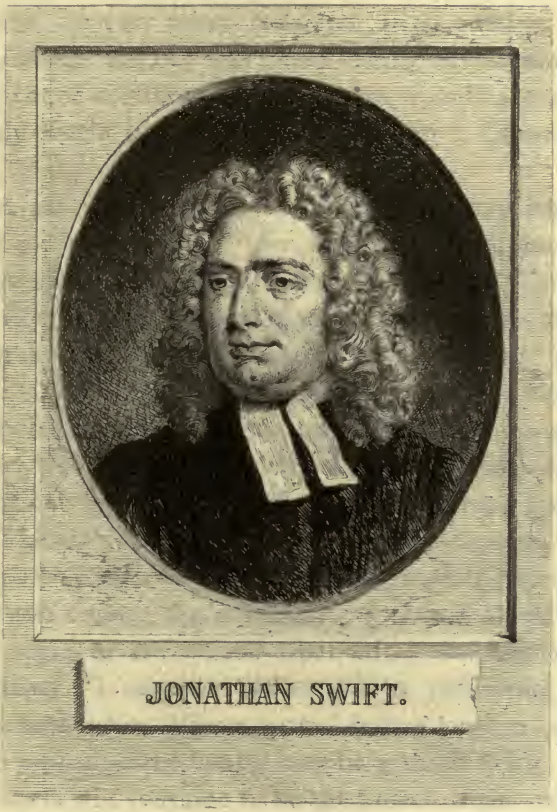
considerable, I tell ye. 'Sartin,' says he agin. 'Wal,' says I, 'they're to work, ain't they?' 'Why, you see they be,' says he, rather quick. 'Wal,' says I, 'I hain't nothin' more to say to you.' 'Wal,' says he, laughin' good-natered, 'you hain't no need to say nothin' more.'" A good argument, was it not?

TO CHARLES F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, March 6, 1844.

. . . You say that my birthplace here has no natural title to the name of "Elmwood." Your delusion is only to be excused by the fact that you have never seen the grounds on which you pass judgment—a delusion which I hope may be dispelled by your visiting me next summer, when, if I do not show you elms enough to vindicate the title we have given it, I will agree that "Bishop's Terrace" has a sweeter sound.

I received the other day a little pamphlet from a Mr. Adamson (do you know him?) on the subject of International Copyright, and, if I knew his address, I should write to him to tell him that I think it the best writing upon that subject which I have ever seen. It is plain and practical, and calculated to convince just the class of persons who need conviction, namely, those who have a repugnancy to ideas—a class much larger than is generally imagined. If I did not heartily dislike Dean Swift, I should compare it with his political tracts. There is one consideration which has occurred to me, and only one, which I missed in reading it. I mean the great benefit it would be to our public libraries to be able to procure cheaper and yet readable editions of good books.



JONATHAN SWIFT.

At present we have no good public libraries, yet these are positively essential to make decent scholars of us. That of our university here is, I suppose, the most complete in the country; but for that they are obliged to buy expensive English editions of necessary works, and, of course, are very much restricted as to number. A short time ago $25,000 was raised among our alumni for the benefit of the library, and that sum would have been probably worth twice as much if we had a Copyright Law. . . .

What are you doing now? And how many papers do you correspond with? *For*, I mean; I hope you do not correspond *with* any of them. I am not entitled to the privileges of any reading-room, so that I cannot trace you out myself. New York letters are become very fashionable. You Gothamites strain hard to attain a metropolitan character, but I think if you *felt* very metropolitan you would not be showing it on all occasions. I see that the exponent of your city, the *Herald*, speaks of the Philadelphia papers as the "provincial press." I saw a puff of Mrs. Child, extracted from that paper, in the Boston *Courier* the other day. I should think she would begin to ask herself what crime she had been committing. I suppose Willis will be publishing his epistles in a "*New Mirror* extra" before long, in order that no well-educated family may be without them.

My fowls still continue to be the flower of the neighborhood. There never were such strutters and crowers as my chanticleers, or such *promising* layers as my hens. My father has now reduced his estimate of the cost of each of my eggs to the moderate sum of a shilling. But

I hope to parade them all before your eyes when you come hither—as you must ere long.

My Poems will soon reach a third edition of five hundred. About eleven hundred have thus far been sold, I believe. So I suppose I may get something from the book yet. If anything comes, I shall pocket it with a free heart, in spite of the shame which our anti-copyright gentlemen would fain lay at the door of an author who demands his wages.

Your affectionate friend,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Aug. 30, 1844.

My dear Friend,—I did not get your letter of the 19th until yesterday, or you may be sure that I should have written sooner to assure you (if words are needful) of my fullest and tenderest sympathy. Maria sends hers also, and there are tears in the eyes of both of us. . . .

I agree entirely with what you have said of Death in your last letter; but at the same time I know well that the first touch of his hand is cold, and that he comes to us, as the rest of God's angels do, in disguise. But we are enabled to see his face fully at last, and it is that of a seraph. So it is with all. Disease, poverty, death, sorrow, all come to us with unbenign countenances; but from one after another the mask falls off, and we behold faces which retain the glory and the calm of having looked in the face of God. To me, at least, your bereavement has come with the softest step and the most hallowed features, for it has opened a new channel for my love to flow towards you in. More, it has made my

I. Severn. C.H. Jeens

John Keats

heart tenderer and more open to all, and I can even almost believe that I love Maria better, as I forecast how she and I may be called upon to bear the same trial together. The older I grow, the less am I affected by the outward observances and forms of religion, and the more confidingness and affection do I feel towards God. "He leadeth me in green pastures." Trust in Providence is no longer a meaningless phrase to me. The thought of it has oftener brought happy tears into my eyes than any other thought except that of my beloved Maria. It is therefore no idle form when I tell you to lean on God. I know that it is needless to say this to you, but I know also that it is always sweet and consoling to have our impulses seconded by the sympathy of our friends.

> "We all are tall enough to reach God's hand,
> The angels are no taller."

In your present affliction you have (according to my idea of poetry) the best right to pass judgment upon the merits of the poets. Those are, it seems to me, the great ones who give us something to lean upon in our sorrow, and something yet to look forward to in our deepest joys and our amplest successes. Neither Byron nor Scott does this. Shakespeare does, so does Milton. In a less degree so do Chaucer, Spenser, and Wordsworth. So, I think, do Coleridge, Keats, and Tennyson. If they give us nothing else, they give us at least a feeling of great-heartedness and exaltation which, if it does not lay hold of the hem of God's mantle, at least

"the extremest skirts of glory sees,
And hears celestial echoes with delight."

I know that it will please you if I copy here a little poem which I wrote in April, 1841, and of which I was reminded by what you said of Death in your last. It is crude in as far as its artistic merits are considered, but there is a glimpse of good in it.

Sin hath told lies of thee, fair angel Death,
Hath hung a dark veil o'er thy seraph face,
And scared us babes with tales of how, beneath,
Were features like her own. But I, through grace
Of the dear God by whom I live and move,
Have seen that gloomy shroud asunder rent,
And in thine eyes, lustrous with sweet intent,
Have read that thou none other wast but Love.

* * * * * *

Thou art the beauteous keeper of that gate
Which leadeth to the soul's desired home,
And I would live as one who seems to wait
Until thine eyes shall say, "My brother, come!"
And then haste forward with such gladsome pace
As one who sees a welcoming, sweet face;
For thou dost give us what the soul loves best—
In the eternal soul a dwelling-place,
And thy still grave is the unpilfered nest
Of Truth, Love, Peace, and Duty's perfect rest.

My now more mature judgment sees many faults in these lines, but I have copied them *verbatim*, since there seems to me to be a charm of simplicity and sincerity about them, which is their chief merit.

I could not restrain my tears when I read what you

say of the living things all around the cast mantle of your child. It *is* strange, almost awful, that, when this great miracle has been performed for us, Nature gives no sign. Not a bee stints his hum, the sun shines, the leaves glisten, the cock-crow comes from the distance, the flies buzz into the room, and yet perhaps a minute before the most immediate presence of God of which we can conceive was filling the whole chamber, and opening its arms to "suffer the little one to come unto him."

God bless you a thousand times and comfort you, for he only can. . . . I know not what I can say to your wife. Most lovingly yours,

J. R. L. and M. W.

I shall write again soon.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Sept. 18, 1844.

My dear Friend,— . . . I have inherited from my father an intellectual temperament which would fain keep its hands soft. I feel the sorrows of my friends and their joys with as much intensity as human nature is capable of, but I too often remain satisfied with the feeling. Partly from constitutional indolence and partly from timidity, I sit in the corner with my heart full and let others speak and act. But, with God's help, I am resolved to conquer this. I am too ready to leave things undone, because I am never satisfied with my manner of doing them. . . .

You speak of our marriage as one of "convenience," by which I suppose you mean that our means are such

as to warrant us in being married at any time. This is not the case. My *Pioneer* debts will not be paid before January. . . . My father would have assisted me greatly, but he lost a great part of his own property a few years ago, and his income will hardly keep pace with his generosity. You will be glad to hear, however, that he has offered, without any hint on my part, to build me a cottage on a piece of his land here, if it can be done for a thousand dollars or thereabout. I think that I can put up quite a comfortable little nest for that sum, with a spare chamber for you and your wife whenever you may be able to pay us "provincials" a visit. . . . I have already christened my new castle (though as yet an atmospheric one) "Elmwood Junior," much to the delight of my father, who is one of the men you would like to know. He is Dr. Primrose in the comparative degree, the very simplest and charmingest of sexagenarians, and not without a great deal of the truest magnanimity. Nothing delights him so much as any compliment paid to me, except the idea of building me a cottage. If you could see him criticising the strut or crow of one of my chanticleers with a child's enthusiasm, or reading a review of my poems which he does not think laudatory enough (at the same time professing himself a disciple of Pope and pretending that he can't understand more than a tithe of what I write), or pointing out the advantages of the site he has selected for planting the Colony from Elmwood Senior, or talking of the efficacy of prayer, or praising "the old Federal Party with Washington at its head," or speaking of Jefferson as harshly as his kind heart will let him speak of anybody—in

short, if you had a more than Asmodeus-faculty and could take the roof off his heart, you would fall in love with him. He has had far more sorrow, too, than most men, and his wounds have been in his tenderest part, . . . but nothing could shake my beloved and honored father's trust in God and his sincere piety. . . .

Most affectionately your friend,

J. R. L.

I have partly written a poem on Columbus, to match with "Prometheus" and "Cromwell." I like it better than either in point of artistic merit.

TO THE SAME

Philadelphia, Jan. 16, 1845.
127 Arch Street.

My dear Friend,—I received this morning the two numbers of your *Broadway Journal*, and am in haste to tell you how much I like it. I know all you wish to say about the difficulty of starting—of fulfilling all your notions in the first few numbers—but with all that I must say that I think you have succeeded in making a very interesting paper. Before I go further, I will find a few faults. . . .

I shall, I doubt not, have something to send you by the early part of next week. I mean in prose. As to the arrangement you propose, I know not what to say. In spite of your surmise, I am so little in the habit of measuring what I do by dollars and cents that nothing is harder for me than to set a value on my wares. In your case I am completely cornered. I know nothing

of your ability, and I certainly should steer by that if I were better informed. I cannot think that my contributions will be so valuable as those of many others. You know best.

I understand you to mean that the prose contributions shall be anonymous. For "Columbus" I should expect more than for prose. But I had a thousand times rather give it to you (as it would be my natural impulse to do) than think you had paid me more for it than you could easily afford. I know that you would not think that you had paid too *much* for it—but for me, I could write a better poem, but could never get rid of such a recollection. I wish you to treat me as a friend. I do not speak in a worldly sense, meaning that you should do the best for me you can, but that you should call on me to do the best for you that I can.

You know our circumstances exactly. . . . All I ask for is enough for necessaries. Graham will no doubt give me (as he has done) $30 for a poem; my new book* will pay me $100 for the first edition if it sells well; my volume of poetry may be called $50 a year more. . . . Another source of revenue has opened to me since I have come hither. The antislavery Friends pay me $5 for a leader to their paper which comes out once a fortnight, making $10 per month while I am here. You see I am not in want. . . .

Yours lovingly,

J. R. L.

Maria sends her love to you and your wife.

* "Conversations on the Old Poets."

Edgar A. Poe.

TO THE SAME

Philadelphia, Feb. 25, 1845.

Amid infinite interruptions, I have at last managed to finish a poem for you which is better in conception than in execution.* I intended it to be one of the best I have ever written, but have a sort of notion that it is rather flat. It certainly is so (as all poems must be) compared with the conception. Written in the metre which I have chosen it is perhaps too long, but the plot would have sufficed for quite a long and elaborate poem, into which a good deal of reflection and experience might have been compressed. However, I think that you will "kind o' like it."

To-morrow (Wednesday) I am going out into the country to spend two or three days with some orthodox Quakers, and to-day I have got to write a leader for the Pennsylvania *Freeman*, which must be done before noon.

I do not know whether to be glad or sorry that you have associated Poe and Watson with you as editors. I do not know the last; the first is certainly able, but I think that there should never be more than one editor with any proprietary control over the paper. Its individuality is not generally so well preserved. You know best.

The paper is highly spoken of by all who see it, and I trust will succeed to your wish. . . .

* "The Ghost-Seer," printed in the *Broadway Journal*, March 8, 1845.

TO THE SAME

Philadelphia, March 21, 1845.

. . . I know, my dear friend, how hard a thing it is to get a paper under way. I know, by bitter experience in the *Pioneer*, how many conflicting interests are involved and how impossible it is at first to make it all you wish it.

I do not wish to see the *Journal* a partisan. I think it could do more good by always speaking of certain reforms and of the vileness of certain portions of our present civilization as matters of course, than by attacking them fiercely and individually. It always goes against my grain to say anything ill of a man or men, and I assure you that (minister's and conservative's son as I am) I do not occupy my present position without pain.

If I do not help you efficiently when I get out of the turmoil I am in here—why, I shall add a large square to the paving of hell.

We are just about to start for the country, and I have no time to add anything more. . . .

You will be glad to hear that the first edition of my "Conversations" (1000) are gone already. I begin to feel rich. Owen owes me nearly $300 at this moment! I hope my wealth will not make me proud. . . .

TO MISS L. L. WHITE

New York, May 24, 1845.

My dear Lois,—Yesterday, having been a day of extraordinary excitement and adventure in the wedded

life of Maria and myself, seems to afford me an opportunity of giving you Scripture measure in the matter of the letter I promised to write you from Philadelphia. Whether from Philadelphia or New York, however, matters very little, since my heart was as near you in one place as in the other.

I shall begin my account of yesterday's proceedings with a sketch of an interesting scene which took place in our chamber yesterday morning. It had been arranged beforehand that we should make an excursion to Greenwood Cemetery in the forenoon, and visit Mrs. and Miss P——, who live in Brooklyn (near the cemetery) on our return. Now, you must know that I am becoming more and more inclined to Grahamism every day, and on the particular morning of yesterday was indulging Maria with my views on that subject, when the following dialogue took place:

I. "I think I shall eat no meat after our return home."

M. "Why not begin to-day?"

I. (With heroic excitement) "I will!"

M. "I'm sure we've had nothing in the way of meat here that has been very tempting."

I. "True, but we shall doubtless have a fine dinner at the P——'s. And, on second thoughts, I believe I shall begin my reform to-morrow."

(*Exeunt.* End of 1st Act.)

The next scene of this exciting drama is laid in Brooklyn, where we sat waiting in a curious affair called an omnibus, and regarded as such with intense pride by

the driver. My opinion in regard to this machine is not fully made up. At first I was inclined to regard it as the first crude idea of a vehicle which entered the creative mind; but afterwards I was more inclined to believe it to have [been] an instrument of torture devised by the Inquisition, and given by a Jesuit, in the disguise of a very benevolent old gentleman, to the proprietor of the line for the purpose of punishing such heretics as could not otherwise be got into the power of the Holy Office. It was dragged by two creatures who might have been put into any menagerie and safely exhibited as sea-horses, for all the resemblance they bore to the original land animal of the same name. While sitting waiting for these creatures to recover sufficient strength for a start, an Irishwoman, who had regarded us attentively for some time, exclaimed, "Faix! it's a long time it is sence I've seen anny beauty, but I see a dale of it now anny way!" Maria has a private theory that the woman was looking directly at her when she gave voice to this inspiration, but I cannot but think that there was another individual of a different sex . . . but I will say no more. In either case the woman showed a great deal of discernment considering her limited opportunities. Now imagine us to have perambulated the cemetery for the space of three hours with no food but what is technically called food for reflection, suggested by the monstrous inventions which surviving relatives heap over the (properly) mortified remains of the departed. It was now half-past four o'clock, and we had eaten nothing since eight in the morning. This was carrying the principles of Grahamism to a supernatural extent. Still, I de-

lighted myself with the reflection that this involuntary asceticism would cease on our arrival at the hospitable mansion of the P——'s. On arriving there we found that their dinner-hour had been recently changed from five o'clock to two! An entirely intellectual banquet had been prepared for us, the bill of fare of which I give below:

1ST COURSE

Mrs. P—— and the Miss P—— who was at Watertown, who met us in the entry and accompanied us to the drawing-room.

2D COURSE

A tall Miss P—— who was engaged to somebody at sea.

3D COURSE

A short Miss P—— who was engaged to nobody, and whose betrothed (if she had one) would be likely to go to sea and remain there.

4TH COURSE

A Mr. Charles P—— who had inoculated himself for the small-pox, to the great discontentment of his father.

DESSERT,

consisting of inquiries by the tall Miss P—— concerning our travels and relations, and startling revelations of her own perilous journeyings by the short one. This fragrant repast was preceded by a Quaker grace, being a silence of ten minutes, and was interspersed at intervals (such was our gratitude and pious feeling) by similar golden pauses. The whole was followed by the agreeable exercise of walking a mile to the ferry-boat. . . .

If I ever am rich enough, I intend to erect a monument in Greenwood Cemetery to my hopes of dinner which I buried there. Exhausted nature here demands repose.

We go to Staten Island this afternoon. How long we shall stay remains to be seen. We shall probably not arrive at home until the 4th or 5th of next month.

Maria is quite well and has gone to visit Mrs. Child. Love to all.

Affectionately your brother,

J. R. L.

TO EDWARD M. DAVIS*

Elmwood, July 24, 1845.

My dear Friend,— . . . If you had cast about for a hard question to ask me, you could not have been more successful than in desiring my advice as to a course of reading. I suppose that very few men who are bred scholars ever think of such a thing as a *course* of reading after their Freshman year in college. Their situation throws books constantly in their way, and they select by a kind of instinct the food which will suit their mental digestion, acquiring knowledge insensibly, as the earth gathers soil. This was wholly the case with myself. There is hardly any branch of knowledge in which I have not read *something*, and I have read a great many out-of-the-way books, yet there are many which almost every one reads that I have never even opened. For example, I have read books on magic and astrology, and yet never looked into a history of England. All that I know of it I have acquired by reading the biog-

* This letter, with others addressed to Mr. Davis, was printed in *Harper's Weekly*, April 23, 1892.

raphies of men whose lives *are* the history of England. So, too, I know more of the history of ancient Rome than I do of that of America.

Having now proved myself to be wholly incompetent to give any advice (as is usually, though more unconsciously, the case with advisers), I proceed to give it. If I were in your case, I should read History. Hume and Smollett for England, Robertson for Scotland, Niebuhr and Gibbon for Rome, Mitford for Greece, Bancroft for America. Thucydides and Livy and Herodotus you can read in translations, also Tacitus. Read them always with a modern eye, and note how exactly alike men have been in all ages of the world as far as the *external* motives of life go. In the *internal* you will find a steady progress. You will see men in every age and country with genius, self-devotion, high moral principle—in short, with *inspiration.* You will see the masses always struggling with a blind instinct upward, but never so much as now will you find great principles diffused and forcing men into action. All history shows the poverty and weakness of Force, the wealth and power of Gentleness and Love.

Read also the Reviews; they will keep you abreast of the current of modern literature. In astronomy read Nichol; in geology, Lyell. Michelet's History of France (now publishing) is a good one, I believe.

After you have once begun to read you will need no advice. One book will lead to another, and that to a third. If I think of any better books, I will mention them in another letter. But History must always lie at the foundation. . . .

I blew another "dolorous and jarring blast" in the *Courier* the other day, which you will probably see in the *Liberator* of this week or next.* I was impelled to write by the account of the poor fugitives who were taken near Washington. I think it has done some good. At any rate, it has set two gentlemen together by the ears about Dissolution, and they are hammering away at each other in the *Courier*. Tell Miller that an article for the *Freeman* will reach him as early as Tuesday. . . . Farewell.

I remain, with true love, your friend,

J. R. L.

TO CHARLES F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Aug. 8, 1845.

My dear Friend,—I have a remark or two to make upon your last letter before (if I may be allowed to write under the sign Taurus) I begin to answer it. What you say about the "unity of evil" is perfectly true, but you are worse than those "philanthropic eunuchs" you talk about if you consider the "unity of evil" as a sufficient reason for putting one's hands in one's pockets and sitting quietly down upon the fence in the sun. You are, like most men, satisfied with a single truth—you must cultivate your acquisitiveness in that direction a little more. I admit that when all these sore boils with which God hath smitten our social

* The stanzas beginning

"Look on who will in apathy, and stifle they who can
The sympathies, the hopes, the words, that make man truly man."

system spring from one disease, it would be idle to apply external remedies to *one* of them, meanwhile leaving all the rest to grow up to a more poisonous and incurable head. Nor is this the system of therapeutics which obtains among abolitionists. We believe that the only remedy for this terrible disease is the application of Christianity to life. We cry out most loudly against slavery because that seems to be the foulest blotch, and it is easier to awaken the attention of the worldly and indifferent to that than to any other. Their interest once excited, they may be safely left to themselves; for Truth is like that stalwart Paddy at the gate of heaven—if she has been able to get her finger even into the crack of the door of a man's soul, there is never a fear but she will make her whole body follow. For my own part, I had rather be eye-witness of all the cruelty done upon the Southern plantations than see your poor harlots flaunting up and down Broadway. Besides, my dear friend, is it not better (even allowing that the abolitionists are one-sided) to be explicit and constant in our testimony against one sin than silent in regard to all? There is one abolitionist, at least, who seldom lets slip any opportunity for outspeaking against any institution which seems to him to stand in the way of Freedom. Absolute freedom is what I want—for the body first, and then for the mind. For the body first, because it is easier to make men conscious of the wrong of that grosser and more outward oppression, and after seeing that, they will perceive more readily the less palpable chains and gags of tyranny. Believe me, my system is fully as unitarian as your own, and whatever extrav-

agancies I may seem guilty of, you may be sure they have a philosophical bearing (in my eyes) upon the one great object I have in view.

The next remark upon your letter which I have to make is, that if John Quincy Adams does receive eight dollars a day for his hatred of slavery, he does no more than any of the rest of us. If you were to publish an antislavery paper you would charge three dollars a year for it, and so should I. The paying of popular representatives had its origin in a good principle, and has been perverted no more than other good principles by the license of the times. The last English member of the Commons house who took pay was Andrew Marvell, the worthy friend of Milton and possessing even a purer mind than that of the great poet. I would not compare Adams with Marvell, for I think that there is a vast deal of humbug in the reputation of the former. He is not well seen in the very A B C of Freedom. It is a good trait in us Americans that we are so fond of plastering together an image of greatness to fall down before and worship—we shall be all the more ready to worship the reality when we are fortunate enough to get it.

My next defence is about the "green ice."* I did

* In Lowell's poem, "To a Pine-Tree," he had written:

> "Thou alone know'st the splendor of winter,
> Mid thy snow-silvered, hushed precipices,
> Hearing crags of green ice groan and splinter,
> And then plunge down the muffled abysses
> In the quiet of midnight."

In "The Ancient Mariner," Coleridge says:

> "And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
> As green as emerald."

95/1

Henry W. Longfellow

not have Coleridge's lines in my mind when I wrote my verses. Coleridge had a fine, true eye, and I would gladly accept him (if I wanted any aid) in confirmation. I *did* trust my own eyes. When I was a boy, my favorite sport was sailing upon Fresh Pond in summer, and in winter helping the hardy reapers to get in their harvest of ice, and never was a field of wheat in July of a more lovely green. You have doubtless seen ice-*bugs* (as most people entomologically pronounce it), and they may not be green, though I think they are described as of all colors. But *my* ice was fresh-water ice, and I am right about it. . . .

TO H. W. LONGFELLOW

Elmwood, Aug. 13, 1845.

My dear Longfellow,*—I have been meaning to write to you now for some time (though I did not reckon on so *very* bad a pen as this), in order to make some inquiries of you about Brattleborough while you are on the spot. Feeling a movement of the spirit to write this morning, I obey it—so if my letter be stupid, the spirit is to blame for it and not I.

I do not wish to lay too great a burthen upon your already heavy-laden eyes, but I should like to know the expense of living and being watered, and also your impressions of Dr. Wesselhoeft and of the efficacy of the system under his management.

I do not wonder at your being inspired to write a poem upon the summer rain up there, keeping as you

* Mr. Longfellow was at the Brattleborough "Water Cure."

do the sign of Aquarius (or a *fac-simile*) stationary over your heads like Joshua's sun. As Canace's ring taught her the bird dialects "without a master," I suppose your experience at Brattleborough will establish quite a new relation and bond of sympathy between you and the plants. You will be able to enter into all their feelings, whether in a drizzle, a long rain, a sudden, heavy shower, or under the artificial pluviosity of the gardener's watering-pot. After you have finished your forty days and forty nights there, you will be in good case to appreciate the situation of that Yankee Antediluvian whose interview with Noah Miss Martineau has related.

Your poem, by the way, was published here at a very lucky season—just on the heels of a magnificent rain. The very morning before I saw it I was meditating some verses on the self-same theme. *Pereant qui ante nos nostra dixerunt*, says St. Augustine (confound those who plagiarize from us before we were born!), a sentiment which I recommend to Mr. Poe. However, though you have cut me off, I have the satisfaction of having poured out some verses on the subject six years ago, and, oddly enough, in the same irregular measure. My poem, however, was nothing like yours (having only two good verses in it), and I thank you for your timely intervention between me and a new attempt. I am glad you had a kind word for the dear, patient oxen who, as they wallow along through the furrows with the plough, are the only good commentary on Virgil's "Georgics." But I do not (may I say it?) like the metre of your poem, and that for two reasons. Firstly, it does not satisfy my ear (which, to be sure, was not

your object in writing it); and secondly, it will prevent the poem from being widely popular. The *images* in your poem leave nothing to be said—they are a complete landscape, a true Gainsborough—and had the metre been a little more within the compass of the popular ear (which, truly, is *long* enough to compass anything), you would have exhausted the theme. There would nevermore have been room for another poem in the same kind. Have I been too frank? Alas, if we could only be as frank in speech as we can be on paper, what a happy world were this!

Charles Sumner's oration * was published on Saturday. I got it yesterday, and have not yet read it through, but I have read enough to honor him for it. I can warrant his having made *one* fast friend by it, if no more. I suppose he has committed a social *felo de se* by it. I look upon his fearless book as the tombstone of his consideration in the minds of nine tenths of this Infidel Community. Regarding it in this light, and remembering the subject, he might have borrowed a good motto from the Italian burying-grounds—*Carlo Sumner implora pace.* But he is secure of a resurrection, and that before our mythological judgment-angel is put to his trumps. You blew a noble blast in the same key a year ago—it had never occurred to me before that the Arsenal at Springfield could be of *any* use. C. S. will find it of great moment to his character to have put himself among the martyrs. I have had a touch, now and then, of this mosquito-martyrdom of

* On "The True Grandeur of Nations."

the nineteenth century, for my fanaticism of looking at things without the medium of our rose-colored social spectacles, and I only wish I had been pecked at a little more. Christ has declared war against the Christianity of the world, and it must down. There is no help for it. The Church, that great bulwark of our practical Paganism, must be reformed from foundation to weathercock. Shall we not wield a trowel, nay, even carry the heavy bricks and mortar for such an enterprise? But I will not ride over you with my hard-mouthed hobby.

Everything is safe at your house or else your chanticleer lied, for he crowed with a lusty satisfaction as I passed yesterday. I know he would not have had the heart if anything had been amiss. They have begun this morning to plough up your lawn. It would do you good to be at home and get a snuff of the fresh upturned sod.

I wonder if Mrs. Longfellow remembers (I suppose she does not) meeting me at Dr. Channing's once—it is now four years ago. I was then a bashful, shy youth (I am not much better now), and remember keenly the shivering awe with which I plunged into the responsibility of entertaining her. Yet in that conversation (as laborious to her, I doubt not, as to me) she made my heart warm towards her—and it will never grow cold again. She was the first stranger that ever said a kind word to me about my poems. She spoke to me of my "Year's Life," then just published. I had then just emerged from the darkest and unhappiest period of my life, and was peculiarly sensitive to sympathy. My vol-

ume, I knew, was crude and immature, and did not do me justice; but I knew also that there was *a heart* in it, and I was grateful for her commendation. We do not know how cheap the seeds of happiness are, or we should scatter them oftener.

Maria is very well, and we shall both be glad to have you back again for neighbors. I hope we shall see you oftener at Elmwood.

I have written you a scrambling kind of letter, but I felt a motion to write, and, as that does not often occur to me in regard to letters, I made the most of it.

Maria joins me in sending kindest remembrances, and I remain

Affectionately your friend,

J. R. L.

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Aug. 21, 1845.

My dear Friend,— . . . Poe, I am afraid, is wholly lacking in that element of manhood which, for want of a better name, we call *character*. It is something quite distinct from genius—though all great geniuses are endowed with it. Hence we always think of Dante Alighieri, of Michael Angelo, of Will Shakespeare, of John Milton—while of such men as Gibbon and Hume we merely recall the works, and think of them as the author of this and that. As I prognosticated, I have made Poe my enemy by doing him a service. In the last *Broadway Journal* he has accused me of plagiarism, and *misquoted* Wordsworth to sustain his charge. "Armour

rustling on the walls on the blood of Clifford calls," * he quotes, italicizing "*rustling*" as the point of resemblance. The word is really "*rusting*"—you will find the passage in Wordsworth's "Song sung at Brougham Castle," etc. My metaphor was drawn from some old Greek or Roman story which was in my mind, and which Poe, who makes such a scholar of himself, ought to have known. There is a similar incident in Chaucer's "Knight's Tale," probably from the same source. Any one who had ever read the *whole* of Wordsworth's poem would see that there was no resemblance between the two passages. Poe wishes to kick down the ladder by which he rose. He is welcome. But he does not attack me at a weak point. He probably cannot conceive of anybody's writing for anything but a newspaper reputation, or for posthumous fame, which is but the same thing magnified by distance. I have quite other aims.

If I had written for the praise of the newspapers I might have been satisfied long ago. But I have never yet (I may speak thus frankly to one whom I love) seen any criticism on my *poetry* (for I value that at a thousand times my prose) that went beneath the surface and saw the spiritual, and above all the present, application of

* Lowell had written in his poem "To the Future":

> "As life's alarums nearer roll,
> The ancestral buckler calls,
> Self-clanging from the walls
> In the high temple of the soul."

Wordsworth's couplet reads—

> "Armour rusting in his halls
> On the blood of Clifford calls."

what I have written since I came of age. Criticism nowadays deals wholly with externals. It looks upon every literary effort as a claim set up for a certain amount of praise, and answers every such claim accordingly. Though I have never yet done anything that was a fair exponent of the poetical abilities which I am conscious of possessing, yet I have confidence enough in myself (even if I desired fame greatly) to wait serenely and quietly for my time to come round. Yet I am annoyed sometimes at being misconceived by meaner men—not as a poet, but as a man. My sorrows are not literary ones, but those of daily life. I pass through the world and meet with scarcely a response to the affectionateness of my nature. I believe Maria only knows how loving I am truly. Brought up in a very reserved and conventional family, I cannot in society appear what I really am. I go out sometimes with my heart so full of yearning towards my fellows that the indifferent look with which even entire strangers pass me brings tears into my eyes. And then to be looked upon by those who *do* know me (externally) as "Lowell the poet"—it makes me sick. Why not as Lowell the man—the boy rather,—as Jemmy Lowell, as I was at school?

Do not understand me as exaggerating the miseries which my lionhood entails on me. I have embarked in too many unpopular causes to be much of a lion yet. Nevertheless my name has begun to grow, and I would almost give half the rest of my life if I might shirk off upon somebody else all that is generally considered the pleasant result of a literary reputation, and keep the unpleasant part to myself in my happy obscurity. One

reason why I have always felt drawn so strongly towards you is that you have never seemed to look upon me but as a friend, and that when we commune together you lock my authorship on the other side of the door, or admit it only as a third person. Now, how can I expect to be understood, much more to have my poetry understood, by such a man as Poe? I cannot understand the meanness of men. They seem to trace everything to selfishness. Why, B—— (the "Sculptor," as he is called) actually asked Carter how much Poe paid me for writing my notice of him in *Graham's Magazine*. Did such baseness ever enter the head of man? Why, it could not get into the head of a *dog*, even if he had *three* heads like Cerberus. But I shall do something as an author yet. It is my laziness and my dissatisfaction at everything I write that prevents me from doing more. There is something, too, in feeling that the best part of your nature and your performance lies unmined and unappreciated. Do I often talk so much about myself in my letters? If it is wrong, I will be more careful in future. Pay me in my own coin. . . .

TO THE SAME

Wednesday, Feb. 4, 1846.

My dear Friend,—You must count this as two distinct letters, and give me credit accordingly. To tell the truth, I am very much taken up with the baby * at present. It is true our enlarged means enable us to keep a maid, but I do not think Blanche safe in any one's arms

* Born Dec. 31, 1845.

Dag^{tpd} by Plumbe

Margaret Fuller

(MARCHIONESS OSSOLI)

but her mother's and mine, and Maria cannot bear the fatigue of "tending" her a great deal. I belong to a class of philosophers (unhappily, I believe, a small one) who do not believe that children are born into the world to subject their mothers to a diaper despotism, and to be brought down to their fathers after dinner, as an additional digestive to the nuts and raisins, to be bundled up and hurried away at the least symptom of disaffection or disturbed digestion. Unlike many philanthropists, I endeavor to put my principles into practice, and the result is that I find pretty steady employment and (to finish the quotation from the advertisements of serving-men's Elysian Fields) good wages. Blanche already, with a perverted taste, prefers her father to any one else, and considers me (as the antiquaries do whatever they can't explain in the old mythologies, whether it be male or female) as "the personification of the maternal principle." She is a very good child, however, and only cries enough to satisfy us, as the old Greek said, that we have begotten a mortal. The only portentous thing she ever does is to sneeze, and as it would be quite supererogatory in her to do this in order to procure a hearty "God bless you!" from all present, I incline to interpret it by Sir Thomas Browne's theory, who, in his exposure of vulgar errors, after pulling to pieces the notion that there is anything ominous in it, proceeds to inform us that it is an effort of nature to expel any *humor* that may lurk in the brain. If this be so, I should imagine, from Miss Fuller's attempts at facetiousness, which now and then give a melancholy air to the *Tribune*, that she must be an unparalleled sternutator. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Feb. 18, 1846.

My dear Friend,— . . . Transmitted peculiarities and family resemblances have always been a matter of interesting speculation with me, and I sometimes please myself with the fancy that the motto of our family arms—*Occasionem cognosce*—may indicate a similar feeling to my own in the mind of the ancestor who first adopted it. Be that as it may, I never wrote a letter which was not a sincere portrait of my mind at the time, and therefore never one whose contents can hold a rod over me. My pen has not yet traced a line of which I am either proud or ashamed, nor do I believe that many authors have written less from *without* than I, and therefore more piously.

. . . My calling is clear to me. I am never lifted up to any peak of vision—and moments of almost fearful inward illumination I have sometimes—but that, when I look down in hope to see some valley of the Beautiful Mountains, I behold nothing but blackened ruins; and the moans of the down-trodden the world over—but chiefly here in our own land—come up to my ear, instead of the happy songs of the husbandmen reaping and binding the sheaves of light; yet these, too, I hear not seldom. Then I feel how great is the office of poet, could I but even dare to hope to fill it. Then it seems as if my heart would break in pouring out one glorious song that should be the gospel of Reform, full of consolation and strength to the oppressed, yet falling gently and restoringly as dew on the withered youth-flowers of the

oppressor. That way my madness lies, if any. Were I to hang my harp (if we moderns may keep up the metaphor, at least, of the old poets after losing their spirit) on a tree surrounded only by the very sweetest influence of summer nature, and the wind should breathe through its strings, I believe they would sound with a warlike clang.

I do not value much the antislavery feeling of a man who would not have been abolitionist even if no such abomination as American Slavery ever had existed. Such a one would come home from an antislavery meeting to be the unhired overseer of his wife and children and *help* (for I love our Yankee word, teaching, as it does, the true relation, and its being equally binding on master and servant), or he would make slaves of them that he might go to one. It is a very hard thing in society, as at present constituted, for a male human being (I do not say for a man) to avoid being a slaveholder. I never see Maria mending my stockings, or Ellen bringing the water for my shower-bath in the morning, without hearing a faint tinkle of chains. Yet how avoid it? Maria laughs when I propose to learn darning, and Ellen flies into open rebellion and snatches the pail out of my hands when I would fain assume half of the old Israelitish drudgery, and become my own drawer of water. After prolonged controversy and diplomatic negotiation day after day on the cellar-stairs a treaty was concluded by which I was always to bring up my own coal, and yet on this very morning I surprised Ellen, in flagrant violation of the treaty, half way upstairs on her way to my garret with a hodful.

. . . I read "Margaret"* when it first came out, having seen extracted in a newspaper the account of Margaret's first visit to the meeting-house. The book, as a whole, is clumsily constructed and not very well written, but there is a lovely *aura* about it which makes us love it, apart from its many glimpses of rare beauty and touches of genuine humor. Deacon Ramsdill is the first real Yankee I have seen in print. And this reminds me that I have always had it in my mind to write a New England novel which will astonish my friends if it ever gets delivered. Your amazement at a Puseyite Yankee is unphilosophical. The cathedral-and-surplice-mania is the natural reaction from the old *slam-seat* (do you remember the racket after the "long" prayer, which the boys had established into as recognized a part of the services as the scarcely more harmonious noise of wind and catgut in the gallery, and which, being a free motion of the spirit and a genuine enjoyment, I consider as real worship?) meeting-houses and the puritanical creed. Shut Nature out at the door, and she will in at the window, says Sir Roger L'Estrange. If men have not enough spirituality to find an inward beauty in Religion (a creed within the creed—recognized alike by Gentile and Christian), they will begin to bedizen her exterior. You never heard of a poet's sending a pair of ear-rings as a gift to his beloved (though he would find a lovely meaning in them if she chanced to wear them), yet it is a love of the same Beauty (though of a more savage and rude kind) which prompts such a gift in others. I had

* By the Rev. Sylvester Judd—a book which still deserves to find readers.

reserved Blanche as the kernel of my letter, but I have filled it already, and she is so lovely that she will keep till my next. With much affectionate remembrance to you and yours,

We remain your loving friends,

her
Maria Lowell, Blanche x Lowell, and J. R. L.
mark

TO EDWARD M. DAVIS

Elmwood, Feb. 23, 1846.

My dear Friend,— . . . Had you known me before I had used the pen professionally, I might have overwhelmed you with long letters. As it is, I consider every poem I write (whether I publish it or not) as a letter to all those whom I hold personally dear. I feel that I have made a truer communication of myself so than in any other way—that is, that I have in this way written my friends a letter from the truer and better J. R. L., who resides within, and often at a great distance from, the external man, who has some good qualities, but whose procrastination is enough to swamp them all. I put off writing from day to day because I do not like to write a short letter, and cannot bear to send a long one which does not contain the very best essence and outcome of me.

I was just meditating a long letter to you, as I told you in my hurried note, when everything else was driven out of my head by the arrival of a letter by the steamer, which made it necessary for me instantly to prepare an article which I had undertaken to write, and which I had postponed until I could be sure of its being needed.

It is an affair which I wish you to keep strictly to yourself, as the knowledge that I am the author will destroy a part of the effect I wish to produce. I have engaged to write a series of articles for Dickens's new paper,* on "Antislavery in the United States," of which the first has already appeared, and of which I am to forward one by each steamer till I have said my say. Of course, if it became generally known that they were written by a professed abolitionist, it would give them a taint in the delicate nose of the public. The first article is merely introductory, nor will any of them attempt to give any new view, but merely a sketch of the history of the movement without prejudice. . . .

I receive the *Freeman* regularly, and think that it has improved. It seems to have acquired new energy and spirit. I would gladly sometimes send you an article if I felt that I could do any good. I know that it seems a mean sentiment not to be able to do anything for the Right without the reward of seeing an immediate effect. I do not need such bribes, but it seems to me that there are others better qualified than I. When I am writing a poem (like my last, for example), I feel as if I were in my vocation, and though I never hear of it again (as I may truly say I never wish to), I am satisfied with my result. When I agreed to write for the *Freeman* last winter, I did it with fearful misgivings. I did not like to be paid for it either—though, indeed, I took the money from absolute necessity to maintain us independently, which I could not have done without it, and which I was resolved to do without assistance from

* The London *Daily News*.

home, if it were only on bread and water. . . . Our little Blanche is everything to us. She almost hinders me from doing anything but tend her and look at her. She is said by everybody to be a very fine child. She could hardly fail of it with such a mother. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, April 16, 1846.

. . . I know that I am unreasonable to expect you to leave *your* Maria and the children a minute sooner than is absolutely necessary, but I may take credit to myself for having thus much at least of the child surviving in me—that I often wish for unreasonable things. Indeed, what pleasure is there in the ordinary affairs of life in wishing for anything else? I never think of wishing for my breakfast, but I often wish that you and Miller would drop in to breakfast with me. In this way we get the better of time and space for a little, and can imagine a power of ubiquity in our friends which we should be slow to believe in ourselves. Yet I am sometimes not wholly barren of such a gift, and have often, leaving but a mere shell behind me to counterfeit my presence in Cambridge, walked in at your door, or at No. 3 North Fifth Street, or Friend Parker's, and by the richness and frequency of those spiritual visitations have feigned some plausible excuse to conscience for the poverty of my correspondence. It is true that on these occasions I leave no card, but the unsusceptibility of your own sympathies is to blame if you are witless of my neighborhood. How many a time I have met you coming down Arch Street, looking as grave as if you carried

the weight of your whole warehouse upon your head, or were thinking of war or of slavery or of prostitution, or, in short, of society as it is, and could never get so much as a glance from you! . . . How often have I encountered Miller, buttoned up tight in the leader for the next *Freeman* (which, like a drunkard's appetite, has doubled the frequency of the demand), fearing that slavery may be abolished before he gets it finished, and looking for all the world as if he had relapsed into Presbyterianism, and were just striving to put down an impudent doubt as to whether it were a necessary result of the fitness of things that he should be one of the elect! I have brushed by our excellent friend Charles C. Burleigh, looking like one of the old apostles who had slept in the same room with a Quaker who had gone off in the morning with his companion's appropriate costume, leaving him to accommodate himself as best he might to the straight collar and the single breast of the fugitive. Do not many Quakers go about in an apostolic garb which does not belong to them? Dr. Liddon Pennock has driven by me in his rockaway without once asking me to go out with him to Holmesburg, and I felt as if I deserved it for not having written him a dozen letters since I left Philadelphia. Friend Parker has never once given me one of her benevolent smiles, that make all the poor little friendless children she looks at in the street feel as if they had a mother, though I have walked through Fifth Street, between Market and Arch, many a Fifth-day morning to meet her on her way to market. As I think over all the slights I have received, I begin to feel like a dreadfully injured person.

But I will think of pleasanter matters. You will miss more than you are aware of, I assure you, if you do not spend the night with us, at least before the steamer leaves. Miss Blanche Lowell, in the freshness of her morning spirits, is, in my opinion, a sight well worth a journey from Philadelphia to look upon. Why, she laughs all over. You can see it through her clothes. The very tips of her toes twinkle for joy.* And then there is not a chanticleer in my numerous flock who can compare with her for crowing. She has another grace which I might in modesty omit, but I love truth! She is exceedingly fond of her father. As this is a taste which it is impossible she should have brought from heaven with her, it is only another melancholy instance how early the corrupting influences of earth begin their work. They plant, as we do, in the spring. . . .

TO SYDNEY H. GAY.

Elmwood, June 16, 1846.

My dear Gay,—. . . I wish a distinct understanding to exist between us in regard to my contributions for the *Standard*. When Mrs. Chapman first proposed that I should become a contributor I told her frankly that it

* A year later he wrote, in the anguish of loss, the little poem "The Changeling," stanzas of which seem to echo the happiness in this letter—

"To what can I liken her smiling
Upon me, her kneeling lover?
How it leaped from her lips to her eyelids
And dimpled her wholly over,
Till her outstretched hands smiled also,
And I almost seemed to see
The very heart of her mother
Sending sun through her veins to me!"

was a duty for which (having commenced author very early and got indurated in certain modes of authorship and life) I was totally unfitted. *I* was satisfied with the *Standard* as it was. The paper has never been so good since I have seen it, and no abolitionist could reasonably ask a better. I feared that an uncoalescing partnership of several minds might deprive the paper of that *unity* of conception and purpose in which the main strength of every undertaking lies. This, however, I did not urge, because I knew that a change was to be made at any rate. At the same time I was not only willing but desirous that my name should appear, because I scorned to be indebted for any share of my modicum of popularity to my abolitionism, without incurring at the same time whatever odium might be attached to a complete identification with a body of heroic men and women, whom not to love and admire would prove me unworthy of either of those sentiments, and whose superiors in all that constitutes true manhood and womanhood I believe never existed. There were other considerations which weighed heavily with me to decline the office altogether. In the first place, I was sure that Mrs. Chapman and Garrison greatly overrated my popularity and the advantage which it would be to the paper to have my name attached to it. I am not flattering myself (I have too good an opinion of myself to do so), but judge from something Garrison said to me. It is all nonsense. However it may be in that glorious Hereafter (towards which no man who is good for anything can help casting half an eye), the reputation of a poet who has a high idea of his vocation, is resolved to be

true to that vocation, and hates humbug, must be small in his generation. The thing matters nothing to me, one way or the other, except when it chances to *take in* those whom I respect, as in the present case. I am *teres atque rotundus*, a microcosm in myself, my own author, public, critic, and posterity, and care for no other. But we abolitionists must get rid of a habit we have fallen into, of affirming all the geese who come to us from the magic circle of Respectability to be swans. I said so about Longfellow and I said so about myself. What does a man more than his simple duty in coming out for the truth? and if we exhaust our epithets of laudation at this stage of the business, what shall we do if the man turns out to be a real reformer, and does *more* than his duty? Besides, is it any sacrifice to be in the right? Has not being an abolitionist (as Emerson says of hell) its "infinite satisfactions" as well as those *infiniti guai* that Dante tells us of? To my mind

"All other pleasures are not worth its pains."

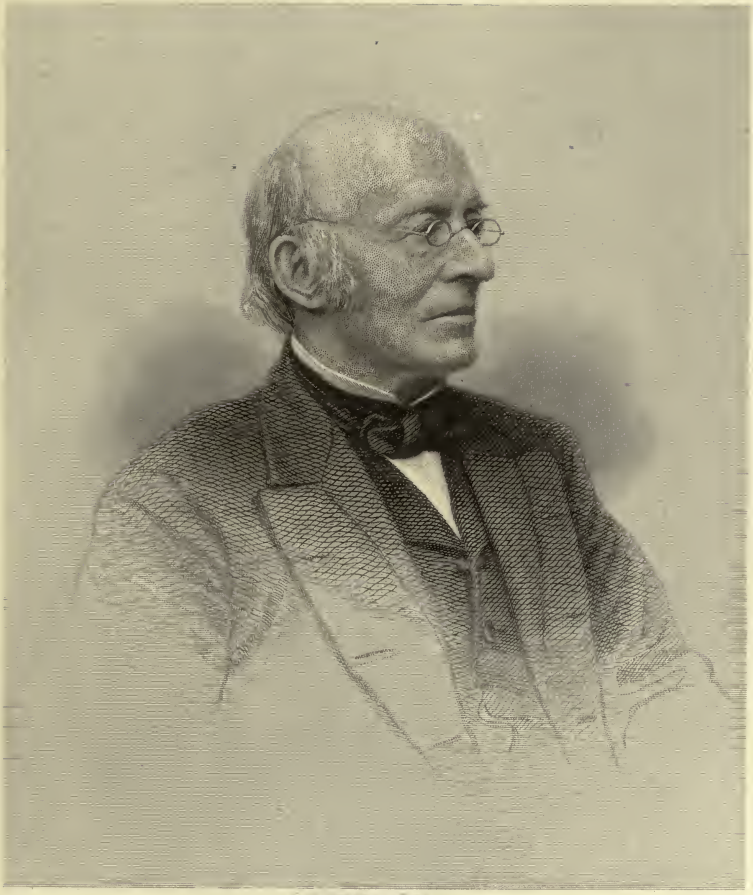
In the next place (turn back a page or two and you will find that I have laid down a "firstly"), if I have any vocation it is the making of verse. When I take my pen for that, the world opens itself ungrudgingly before me, everything seems clear and easy, as it seems sinking to the bottom would be as one leans over the edge of his boat in one of those dear coves at Fresh Pond. But, when I do prose, it is *invitâ Minerva*. I feel as if I were wasting time and keeping back my message, My true place is to serve the cause as a poet. Then my heart leaps on before me into the conflict. I write to

you frankly, as becomes one who is to be your fellow-worker. I wish you to understand clearly my capabilities, that you may not attribute that to lukewarmness or indolence which is truly but an obedience to my Demon. Thirdly (I believe it is thirdly), I have always been a very Quaker in following the Light and writing only when the spirit moved. This is a tower of strength which one must march out of in working for a weekly newspaper, and every man owes it to himself, so long as he does the duty which he sees, to remain here impregnably intrenched. Now, it seems to me that we contributors should write just enough to allow you this privilege—of only writing when the wind sets fair.

Having stated the poetical *cons*, I will now state the plain *pros* of the matter. I will help you as much as I can and ought. I had rather give the cause one good poem than a thousand indifferent prose articles. I mean to send all the poems I write (on whatever subject) first to the *Standard*, except such arrows as I may deem it better to shoot from the ambushment of the *Courier*,* because the old enemy offers me a fairer mark from that quarter. I will endeavor also to be of service to you in your literary selections.

I have told you what *I* expect to do. You must tell me in return what you expect me to do. I agree with you entirely in your notions as to the imprint and the initials. The paper must seem to be unanimous. Garrison is point-blank the other way. But his vocation has not been so much to feel the pulse of the public as

* The Boston *Courier*, an independent daily paper, edited by Mr. J. T. Buckingham.



Wm. Lloyd Garrison.

to startle it into a quicker beat, and if we who make the paper can't settle it, who shall? I have one or two suggestions to make, but shall only hint at them, hoping to see you at Dedham on the 4th proxo. It seems to me eminently necessary that there should be an entire concert among us, and that, to this end, we should meet to exchange thoughts (those of us who are hereabout) and to wind each other up. We ought to know what each one's "beat" is, and what each is going to write.

Then, too, would it not be well to have a *Weekly Pasquil* (I do not call it *Punch*, to avoid confusion), in which squibs and facetiæ of one kind or other may be garnered up? I am sure I come across enough comical thoughts in a week to make up a good share of any such corner, and Briggs and yourself and Quincy could help.

You will find a squib of mine in this week's *Courier*.* I wish it to continue anonymous, for I wish Slavery to think it has as many enemies as possible. If I may judge from the number of persons who have asked me if I wrote it, I have struck the old hulk of the Public between wind and water. I suppose you will copy it, and, if so, I wish you would correct a misprint or two. Instead of

"To be cuttin' folk's throats,"

* The first of "The Biglow Papers," beginning,

"Thrash away, you'll hev to rattle
On them kittle-drums o' yourn,—
'Tain't a knowin' kind o' cattle
Thet is ketched with mouldy corn."

it should be . . "folks's" . ., which you see is necessary to the metre. I believe (for I have not any copy) that instead of "ring this message loudly" it is printed "*sing*"—please put in the right letter. Give our best regards to your wife, and believe me

Very truly your friend,

J. R. Lowell.

I shall send you a poem next week.

TO THE SAME

Stockbridge, Berkshire County, Mass.,
Aug. 4, 1846.

My dear Gay,—Here I am, quite domesticated among the mountains, and in the quietest little village I was ever in. I suppose Mammon is worshipped here also, but it is in an "upper chamber," as it were, and merely on holy days. He has not here the advantage of a "Sabbatical year," which, in the neighborhood of our metropolis, makes every day in the week equally set apart and private for his devotions.

I am afraid you will begin to think that my bowstring snapped in shooting the first arrow, though perhaps the force of the discharge may not give warrant for such a supposition. I send you some verses, with the understanding that I have better ones in store. I think the old proverb of putting the best foot foremost a fit subject for a new chapter in Browne's "Pseudodoxia."

We intend being in Cambridge again before September, and my address still continues to be at that ancient city.

I remain as ever your friend,

J. R. L.

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Nov. 13, 1847.

My dear Friend,— . . . I do not know whether it is a common feeling or not, but I can never get to consider myself as anything more than a boy. My temperament is so youthful that whenever I am addressed (I mean by mere acquaintances) as if my opinion were worth anything, I can hardly help laughing. I cannot but think to myself with an inward laugh, "My good friend, you would be as mad as a hornet with me if you knew that I was only a boy of twelve behind a bearded vizor." This feeling is so strong that I have got into a way of looking on the Poet Lowell as an altogether different personage from myself, and feel a little offended when my friends confound the two. I find myself very curiously compounded of two utterly distinct characters. One half of me is clear mystic and enthusiast, and the other humorist. If I had lived as solitary as a hermit of the Thebais, I doubt not that I should have had as authentic interviews with the Evil One as they, and, without any disrespect to the saint, it would have taken very little to have made a St. Francis of me. Indeed, during that part of my life in which I lived most alone, I was never a single night unvisited by visions, and once I thought I had a personal revelation from God himself. I can believe perfectly in the sincerity of those who are commonly called religious impostors, for, at one time, a meteor could not fall, nor lightning flash, that I did not in some way connect it with my own interior life and destiny. On the other hand, had I mixed more with

the world than I have, I should probably have become a Pantagruelist.

I am perfectly conscious in myself (I may be allowed to say it to you) of finer powers than I have ever exercised or perhaps ever shall. The better qualities of my humor I have never shown except at home, and you would probably be astonished to find what an opinion of my wit obtains among my own family. This is one thing that draws me very strongly towards yourself. I think you have a vastly rarer humorous vein than you have ever put into your writings, and indeed than the majority of readers would appreciate. I mean that your power of humorous conception at present exceeds your artistic skill. I think that you have studied in other writers the humorous effect produced, rather than the how and the why. In the last chapter of "Tom Pepper"* I think the recipe Tom gives his sentimental friend for procuring an adventure is in the purest vein of humor. I feel that I cannot explain myself. What I wish you to study is (as the D.Ds. say of slavery) humor in the abstract. Perhaps I can explain what I mean by humor if I say (and I am sure you will agree with me in it) that Fielding has vastly more *conception of* humor than Dickens, and Dickens vastly more *observation* of humor than Fielding. Dickens seems to me for the most part to be rather a sketcher of humoristic characters (characters in themselves humorous and as such noted by him) than himself a humorist. My idea of the distinction between wit and humor is that wit makes oth-

* A story by Mr. Briggs, entitled "The Trippings of Tom Pepper, an Autobiography."

ers laugh, and humor ourselves cry sometimes. Waldo Emerson is an amusing instance of a (somebody has just interrupted me with a proof-sheet) man who is keenly alive to the incongruousness of *things*, but has no perception (or little) of ludicrous *ideas*. I will copy presently a few verses from my satire about Ellery Channing, which will explain what I mean.

As for Hosea, I am sorry that I began by making him such a detestable speller. There is no fun in bad spelling of itself, but only where the mis-spelling suggests something else which is droll *per se*. You see I am getting him out of it gradually. I mean to altogether. Parson Wilbur is about to propose a subscription for fitting him for college, and has already commenced his education. Perhaps you like the last best because it is more personal and has therefore more directness of purpose. But I confess I think that Birdofredom's attempt to explain the Anglo-Saxon theory is the best thing yet, except Parson Wilbur's letter in the *Courier* of last Saturday (to-day week). The only further use I shall put Hosea to will be to stir up the Legislater at the next session on the subject of allowing women to retain their own earnings, etc.

My satire* remains just as it was. About six hundred lines I think are written. I left it because I wished to finish it in one mood of mind, and not to get that and my serious poems in the new volume entangled. It is a rambling, disjointed affair, and I may alter the form of it, but if I can get it read I know it will take. I intend to give it some serial title and continue it at intervals.

* "The Fable for Critics."

I think my next volume will sell better than my others, for, as you say, Hosea has been a kind of advertisement. He, of course, has nothing to do with the book. He intends publishing a volume of his own before long. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Friday, 31 Dec., 1847.

My dear Friend,—I have not time left to say much more than Happy New Year! I have been hard at work copying my satire, that I might get it (what was finished of it, at least) to you by New-Year's Day as a present. As it is, I can only send the first part. It was all written with one impulse and was the work of not a great many hours, but it was written in good spirits (*con amore*, as Leupp said he used to smoke), and therefore seems to me to have a hearty and easy swing about it that is pleasant. But I was interrupted midway by being obliged to get ready the copy for my volume, and I have never been able to weld my present mood upon the old one without making an ugly swelling at the joint.

I wish you to understand that I make you a New-Year's gift, not of the manuscript, but of the thing itself. I wish you to get it printed (if you think the sale will warrant it) for your own benefit. At the same time I am desirous of retaining my copyright in order that, if circumstances render it desirable, I may still possess a control over it. Therefore, if you think it would repay publishing (*I* have no doubt of it, or I should not offer it to you) I wish you would enter the copyright in your own name, and then make a transfer to me in "consideration of," etc.

I am making as particular directions as if I were drawing my will, but I have a sort of presentiment (which I never had in regard to anything else) that this little bit of pleasantry will *take*. Perhaps I have said too much of the Centurion. But it was only the comicality of his *character* that attracted me—for the man himself personally never entered my head. But the sketch is clever?

I am going to indulge all my fun in a volume of H. Biglow's verses which I am preparing, and which I shall edit under the character of the Rev. Mr. Wilbur. I hope you saw Mr. B.'s last production, which I consider his best hitherto. I am going to include in the volume an essay of the reverend gentleman on the Yankee dialect, and on dialects in general, and on everything else, and also an attempt at a complete natural history of the Humbug—which I think I shall write in Latin. The book will purport to be published at Jaalam (Mr. B.'s native place), and will be printed on brownish paper with those little head and tail-pieces which used to adorn our earlier publications—such as hives, scrolls, urns, and the like.

I think my new volume an advance, though nothing like what my next will be. My pieces hamper me till I get them shut up in a book. Then I feel free of them and can do better. People are qualifying a rather unwilling recognition of me by talking of my *crudeness* and the want of polish in my versification. Now, I may be a bad poet (I don't mean to say I *think* that I am), but I *am* a good versifier. I write with far more ease in verse than in prose; I have studied the subject, and I

understand it from beginning to end. There is not a rough verse in my book that isn't intentional, and if my critics' ears were as good as they are long, they'd perceive it. I don't believe the man ever lived who put more *conscience* into his verses than I do. Good-bye. I want your opinion on what I have sent immediately. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Monday, Feb. 1, 1848.

My dear Friend,— . . . Of course I am perfectly willing that you should use my name to the publisher. I could not help laughing as I read your proposed disposition of the expected finances. To look at you in the character of Alnaschar was something so novel as to be quite captivating to my imagination. Not that I have any fear that you will kick over the basket, but I am afraid the contents will hardly be so attractive to the public as to allow proceeds of the sale to be divided into three. It is really quite a triumph to be able to laugh at my practical friend. However, I will not impoverish your future, but will let you enjoy it as long as it lasts.

A visitor has just come in, and I must say what I have to say quickly. I have now, in addition to what I sent you, and exclusive of Emerson, etc., about a hundred lines written, chiefly about Willis and Longfellow. But, in your arrangements with the printer, you must reckon on allowing me at least a month. I cannot write unless in the mood, and I am taken up now with my review (it is on Browning), which I have to weigh well (in the critical part) and which I do not wish to be

duller than its predecessors. Bowen* seems to regard me as the wit of his *Review*, and I must keep up my character if I die for it.

The new poem† I spoke of is a sort of a story, and more likely to be popular than what I write generally. Maria thinks very highly of it. I shall probably publish it by itself next summer.

. . . Best love to Page. Thank you for your combined broadside. I love to have the kinder notices of me appear in such out-of-the-way places. It is the true way to begin at the bottom. I shall work up into the stupid quarterlies in good time. I liked the notice very much, but you know that I knew before what you two thought about me. I will try to deserve it all one of these days.

Most affectionately your friend,

J. R. L.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, 1848.

. . . I, for one, came into the antislavery ranks after the chief burthen and heat of the day were over, and I would always bear in mind that excellent saying of old Fuller, that "there is more required to make one valiant than to call Cranmer and Jewell coward," as if the fire in Smithfield had been no hotter than what is painted in the Book of Martyrs. There is in this the unerring wisdom of a kind heart. Yet I would qualify it with another of the same author. "One may be a lamb in

* Professor Francis Bowen, then editor of the *North American Review*.

† "Sir Launfal."

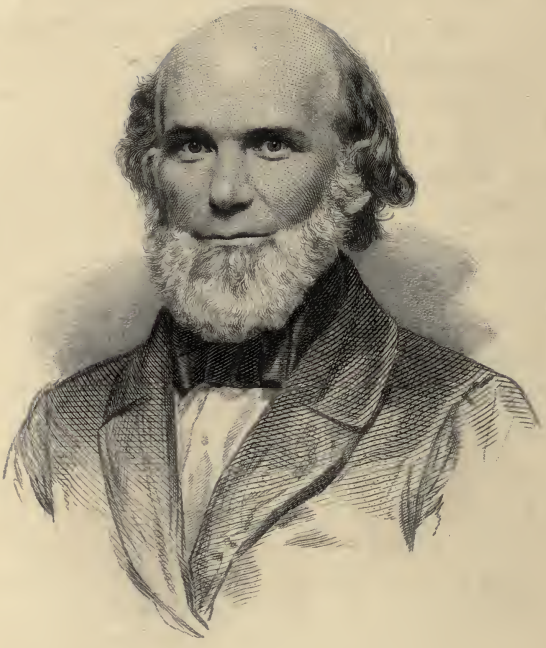
private wrongs, but in hearing general affronts to goodness, they are asses which are not lions. . . ."

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, March 26, 1848.

My dear Friend,— . . . Now about the "Fable." Since I sent you the first half, I have written something about Willis and about Longfellow—and I am waiting for pleasanter weather in order to finish it. I want to get my windows open and to write in the fresh air. I ought not to have sent you any part of it till I had finished it entirely. I feel a sense of responsibility which hinders my pen from running along as it ought in such a theme. I wish the last half to be as jolly and unconstrained as the first. If you had not praised what I sent you, I dare say you would have had the whole of it ere this. Praise is the only thing that can make me feel any doubt of myself. Those poor fellows who provoke you so by attacking me in the magazines are throwing away their time. They go the wrong way to work. Let them applaud, and it might keep me silent for a time. Saint Austin (or some other saint as good as he, I dare say) says, "*Laudari a bonis timeo, a malis detestor*," and there is more sense in the remark than one would have expected from any of the Fathers.

Meanwhile I have not been wholly idle. You will find an article of mine on Browning in the next *North American* in which there will be some things to make you laugh. The notice of Tennyson's "Princess" in the last *Massachusetts Quarterly* was mine. I expect to write an article on the "Conditions and Prospects of



THEODORE PARKER.

Engraved by S.A.Schoff. from Dag. by Allen & Horton.

American Poetry" in the July *N. A. R.*, and the Quarterly editors are anxious to have me give them something about W. S. Landor for their June number.

I have also engaged to write an article a week for the *Anti-Slavery Standard* for one year, and they are to pay me $500. I did not like to take pay for antislavery work, but as my abolitionism has cut me off from the most profitable sources of my literary emolument, as the offer was unsolicited on my part, and as I wanted the money, I thought I had a right to take it. I have spent more than my income every year since I have been married, and that only for necessities. If I can once get clear, I think I can keep so. I do not agree with the abolitionists in their disunion and non-voting theories. They treat ideas as ignorant persons do cherries. They think them unwholesome unless they are swallowed stones and all. Garrison is so used to standing alone that, like Daniel Boone, he moves away as the world creeps up to him, and goes farther *into the wilderness*. He considers every step a step forward, though it be over the edge of a precipice. But, with all his faults (and they are the faults of his position), he is a great and extraordinary man. His work may be over, but it has been a great work. Posterity will forget his hard words, and remember his hard work. I look upon him already as an historical personage, as one who is in his niche. You say it is a merit of Theodore Parker's letter that there is no "Garrisonism" in it. Why, it is full of Garrisonism from one end to the other. But for Garrison's seventeen years' toil, the book had never been written. I love you (and love includes respect); I respect Gar-

rison (respect does not include love). There never has been a leader of Reform who was not also a blackguard. Remember that Garrison was so long in a position where he alone was right and all the world wrong, that such a position has created in him a habit of mind which may remain, though circumstances have wholly changed. Indeed, a mind of that cast is essential to a Reformer. Luther was as infallible as any man that ever held St. Peter's keys. For the very reason that Garrison has done an injustice to you, I will not have you do one to him, because I love you. I have not read Garrison's article about the Howitts. But Sydney told me of it, and showed me your letter—which made me laugh. You shall hear from me about it in another way.

Now, I will tell you the three objects I had in writing my article in the next *North American Review*. First, I wished to say something about criticism; second, to do Browning a service; and third, to see you and Page. You do not see how this last has anything to do with it? Well, I shall get twenty odd dollars for the article on All-fools-day. This I shall set apart to pay the expenses of a visit to New York, which I shall set out upon as soon as I have finished the "Fable." I shall write to you so that you can have it printed, and I can read the proof-sheets when I come. As to your plan for dividing the profits, I will have nothing to do with it. I wish they might be a thousand dollars with all my heart, but I do not think that they will be more than enough to buy something for my little niece there in New York. If I had not thought it the only poem I ever wrote on which

Robert Browning.

there was like to be *some* immediate profit, I should never have given it to you at all. In making it a present to you, I was giving myself a *douceur*, and the greater the sale, the larger the bribe to myself. A part of the condition is that if it make a loss—I pay it. If this be not agreed to, the bargain is null, and I never will finish it. So no more about that, and do not think of me ever as J. R. L. the author, but simply as J. R. L. that loves you. I *will* have two or three quiet nooks into which I can retreat from the pursuit of my own title-pages. Let me be just the plain *man* to you, and forget that I ever took pen in hand except to write you a stupid letter. You are a great deal better than anything you write, and Page than anything he paints, and I always think of you without your pen, and of him without his brushes. If I did not think that I were better than my books, I should never dream of writing another. But I *do* dream of writing many, and such, too, as shall more fully express the real and whole me, and better justify the opinions of those who know me. You are a funny fellow, and I know you laugh at me sometimes, but you may laugh all day long if you will love me at the same time. It is an advantage to friendship that the friends should be as far apart as we are. The two minds cannot then rub together till they are smooth and can cling no longer except by atmospheric pressure from without—if that be what makes two smooth surfaces (plane, I mean) adhere.

Now that I *have* let you into the secret of the "Fable" before it was finished, I hope you will write and give me a spur. I suppose you did not wish to

say anything about it after it became yours. But I wish to be dunned. Tell me whether its being published at any particular time will make any difference, etc., etc., and make any suggestions. I think I shall say nothing about Margaret Fuller (though she offer so fair a target), because she has done me an ill-natured turn. I shall revenge myself amply upon her by writing better. She is a very foolish, conceited woman, who has got together a great deal of information, but not enough *knowledge* to save her from being ill-tempered. However, the temptation may be too strong for me. It certainly would have been if she had never said anything about me. Even Maria thinks I ought to give her a line or two.

Well, I only meant to say *salve et vale!* but here I am at the end of my fourth page. Forgive me this once more, and remember me always as your loving friend.

J. R. L.

I need send no love to W. P.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, 27th April, 1848.

My dear Sydney,—I send you something of my friend Hosea,* which I have copied rather hastily from his somewhat obscure chirography. There was a note of his accompanying it which I have not time to copy. I will send it to-morrow. . . . You can take your choice between this and the other. Both will keep a week, I think. The other's the best, this the most taking. It

* "The Pious Editor's Creed."

is not so humorous as some of Hosea's productions, but it is by far the wittiest. Whichever you take for this week, the other must be delayed a fortnight, as I should rather have a prose article next. I may send some more stanzas when I send Hosea's introductory note.

Yours,
J. R. L.

Take care of pr*a*ying and pr*e*ying in fifth stanza.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Friday, May 5, 1848.

. . . Your beautiful specimen of engraving * came safely and satisfactorily to hand. Nothing could have been more opportune. I had just sent the last money I had in the world to Francis Jackson for the defence of the captives at Washington. I had three cents left. Seldom has the Pierian Spring afforded a more refreshing *draft*.

I have contrived to whittle out something this morning for you in time for the mail, though my head is so full of the Washington fugitives that I can hardly think of anything else, but so full that I cannot write about them with any satisfaction. You will see that Hosea has expressed some sentiments on the occasion in the *Courier*.† Had I thought of writing it soon enough I should have sent it to you. But it would not have kept so well for a fortnight. The one I sent you is better, though not so well adapted to the ears of the groundlings.

* A bank-note or banker's draft.
† "The Debate in the Sennit, sot to a Nusry Rhyme."

I am as glad as you are to be one in advance, and shall try to keep so. I shall probably send a poem next week. . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, May 12, 1848.

My dear Friend,— . . . Here I am in my garret. I slept here when I was a little curly-headed boy, and used to see visions between me and the ceiling, and dream the so often recurring dream of having the earth put into my hand like an orange. In it I used to be shut up without a lamp—my mother saying that none of her children should be afraid of the dark—to hide my head under the pillows, and then not be able to shut out the shapeless monsters that thronged around me, minted in my brain. It is a pleasant room, facing, from the position of the house, almost equally towards the morning and the afternoon. In winter I can see the sunset, in summer I can see it only as it lights up the tall trunks of the English elms in front of the house, making them sometimes, when the sky behind them is lead-colored, seem of the most brilliant yellow. When the sun, towards setting, breaks out suddenly after a thunder-shower and I see them against an almost black sky, they have seemed of a most peculiar and dazzling green tint, like the rust on copper. In winter my view is a wide one, taking in a part of Boston. I can see one long curve of the Charles, and the wide fields between me and Cambridge, and the flat marshes beyond the river, smooth and silent with glittering snow. As the spring advances and one after another of our trees puts

forth, the landscape is cut off from me piece by piece, till, by the end of May, I am closeted in a cool and rustling privacy of leaves. Then I begin to bud with the season. Towards the close of winter I become thoroughly wearied of closed windows and fires. I feel dammed up, and yet there is not flow enough in me to gather any head of water. When I can sit at my open window and my friendly leaves hold their hands before my eyes to prevent their wandering to the landscape, I can sit down and write.

I have begun upon the "Fable" again fairly, and am making some headway. I think with what I sent you (which I believe was about 500 lines) it will make something over a thousand. I have done, since I sent the first half, Willis, Longfellow, Bryant, Miss Fuller, and Mrs. Child. In Longfellow's case I have attempted no characterization. The same (in a degree) may be said of S. M. F. With her I have been perfectly good-humored, but I have a fancy that what I say will stick uncomfortably. It will make you laugh. So will L. M. C. After S. M. F. I make a short digression on bores in general, which has some drollery in it. Willis I think good. Bryant is funny, and as fair as I could make it, immitigably just. Indeed I have endeavored to be so in all. I am glad I did Bryant before I got your letter. The only verses I shall add regarding him are some complimentary ones, which I left for a happier mood after I had written the comic part. *I* steal from him indeed! If he knew me he would not say so. When I steal I shall go to a specie-vault, not to a till. Does he think that he *invented* the Past and has a prescription title to

it?* Do not think I am provoked. I am simply amused. If he had *riled* me, I might have knocked him into a cocked hat in my satire. But that, on second thought, would be no revenge, for it might make him President, a cocked hat being now the chief qualification. It would be more severe to knock him into the middle of next week, as that is in the future, and he has such a partiality towards the past. However, enough of him. My next volume will be enough revenge, for it will be better than my last. . . .

I like a great many of your architectural notions extremely. They are characterized by that sound *sense* which, whatever people may prate of inspiration and what not, built the cathedrals and whatever noble buildings we have. But I think you have an unfounded prejudice against the Gothic. You think it absurd to bring back the architecture of a "Barbarous Age," as you call it. The age which produced those buildings was not barbarous. That which produces Trinity Church† *is*, because it is an abortion, because the conception of the edifice was never clear in the mind of the builder. The Gothic style is just as fit for a church (meeting-house) as ever; the difficulty is that The Church has shrunk so as not to fill her ancient idea. Gothic church-buildings are dark because they are no longer irradiated with the faith and piety which formerly lighted them up like Alloway Kirk. We shall never have a new architecture. The invention of printing destroyed the last hope of it. For-

* Bryant had written a poem with the same title as Lowell's, "To the Past."

† In New York.

merly a great Imagination strove to make itself durable in stone and mortar. Now it builds a securer monument with types and paper. Shakespeare might have invented a new order of architecture had he lived in the Middle Ages. Coming later, as he did, he invented a new order of poetry—for, let the mousers trace all the resemblances they will, it is entirely new in its idea. Building is the *play* of a younger and less self-conscious age. It is children who play with blocks and make card-houses. You are doubtless right when you say (as I have heard you) that *fitness* for its use is the test of a good building. That is, you are partly right. Fitness is a good thing, and, were buildings underground, would be the only thing. But a good building appeals not only to the sense of *constructiveness*, it should in some sort depend for its effect on its capability of satisfying all the qualities of the mind — or all the artistic ones, at least. Should Page draw his Ruth in simple outline, it would express his idea, but not *all* his idea nor all sides of it. He wishes also to delight the sense of color, of arrangement, etc. It seems to me that one leading fault of our architecture, as in that of new countries everywhere, is want of proportion. But we of necessity build so much and our people learn so quickly, that I cannot help looking for *good* architecture here, though I despair of *new*. I think that many of the granite warehouses in Boston (the ones lately built) are fine buildings. But there is an offensive parsimony in the use of ornament. For example, they put sometimes a hood (or whatever you call it) over the top of a window with no corresponding projection below, giving the effect of a person with a pro-

jecting upper jaw. Then, for the sake of your idol of fitness (*light* being the chief requisite where the basement story consists of shops), they support a heavy superstructure on slender iron pillars, and in this way produce buildings which I expect to tumble on me whenever I pass them. While our church-buildings are poor and jejune because our Church is dead, our ships, our railroad stations, and our shops are our best specimens of architecture because commerce, trade, and stocks are our religion. These are the temples we erect to Mammon, our God.

The next time you write will you give me the last line of that part of the "Fable" I sent you, and let it be soon? I wish to begin to copy the additions. The sooner you let me know, the sooner you will get the rest—so there is a bribe for you to write. . . .

I fear you will not find much to please you in my contributions to the *Standard*. It is not the place for me. It *fags* me to deal with particulars. The tendency of my mind is too reflective. I can interest myself in general ideas (such as include the particulars), but weary of their application to the present. The poems I send you will like. And yesterday I sent Sydney an imaginary conversation which I would have you read.* However, I have hardly got warm in the saddle yet, and, at any rate, I do not feel uncomfortable, for I told them frankly beforehand that I thought they made a mistake in engaging me. I do not know how I should have got through the year without the salary, though. I am

* "An Imaginary Conversation," in which the speakers were Mr. Calhoun, Mr. Foote, and General Cass.

afraid to sell the land we own, for fear I should in some way lose the proceeds, and it produces a very small income. One of my tenants I have just let off from his lease, because he thought he could do better with less land. This takes off about a sixth of my income. Another has not yet paid me a cent, and I cannot ask him for it, since it seems to me that the man who tills the land and makes it useful has a better right to it than he who has merely inherited it. But with my *Standard* salary I shall be rich, after I have paid a note which I gave for the stereotype plates of my last volume, and which will be due on the third of June. This will prevent my coming on till after that time, as I shall want every cent of money due me till then to pay it with. I hope to finish the "Fable" next week.

Your dear friend,
J. R. L.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, May 12, 1848.

My dear Sydney,—I send this week an *immense* deal of pork for a shilling. I suppose you will not have room for it next week, as the Annual Meeting will fill your paper. The note to yourself I wish you would insert in your Correspondence Department, when you find room.

As usual, I have just saved the mail, and have no time to say anything. I cannot come on till after the first week in June, as I have a note to pay on the 4th (for stereotyping my poems). Your remittance at the end of this month will oblige me as much as it did before. Without it, I shall have to borrow money. But perhaps your Congress have not ratified the doings of the Com-

mittee, and have turned me out? You will see by this week's grist that I have just got the *hang* of the treadmill.

Affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, May 19, 1848.

I send you another Hosea. I am rather stupid this morning, and don't know whether it's the thing or not. It's everlasting hot to-day. Don't print it at any rate till after the Conversation.

I have not seen this week's *Standard*, and do not know what you have printed.

I shall (if I am well) be in N. Y. the first or second week in June to a certainty, and then we can talk matters over.

Tell Briggs I have finished John Neal, Hawthorne, Cooper, *myself*, and something more, and that there will not be more than twelve hundred lines. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, June 8, 1848.

My dear Sydney,—The draft came just in time. I got it on the second and the note was due on the third.

I send something which you can either put in without any title or call it "Freedom," just as you please. There is something in it which I like.

Never before could I have thought that New York would have appeared to me in the light of a Fortunate Island. But it seems to recede before me. I thought to see you this week—but cannot come yet. I cannot

come without any money, and leave my wife with 62½ cents, such being the budget brought in by my secretary of the treasury this week. Tell Briggs that his ticket came safely, and that I am thankful therefor. I am expecting some money daily—I always am—I always have been, and yet have never been fairly out of debt since I entered college. But Providence will certainly turn an eye my way soon, and then I shall get to New York and see you all.

You never have made a single criticism yet. Not that I should not row you up—but then I might profit by them after that. I mean, you never have told me whether I send what the paper wants.

Good-by,
H. WILBUR.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, June 29, 1848.

. . . I send you something this week which has the benefit of my own approbation, as you will perceive by my having for the first time subjoined my initials.* Perhaps I give it too much credit. It is just written, and I am not far enough off from it yet to get a proper view. Don't let 'em print "a cross" *across* in the last verse. . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Aug. 22, 1848.

. . . At length you have the whole [of the "Fable for Critics"]—that is, I hope so, for I have not heard yet whether you have found the first part or not. Let

*The poem "To Lamartine."

me know soon, and also whether I shall have a proof soon. . . .

I hope that while the "Fable" is going through the press you will make frankly every suggestion and criticism that occurs to you—and be as *minute* as you please. . . .

I cannot tell you now what a truly happy time I had in New York, only it was quite too short. . . .

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, Sept. 2, 1848.

...We are all well, and I am as busy as I can be with Mr. Biglow's poems, of which I have got between twenty and thirty pages already printed. It is the hardest book to print that ever I had anything to do with, and, what with corrections and Mr. Wilbur's annotations, keeps me more employed than I care to be. . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Sunday, Sept. 3, 1848.

My dear Friend,— . . . For your other gift, of "Keats's Life," I have other thanks to offer. It is a book that I have long desired to see. Indeed, I once meditated the raising of such a monument to him myself (it was in 1840), and, I think, had even gone so far as to write a letter to his brother George—which I never sent. Keats was a rare and great genius. He had, I think, the finest and richest fancy that has been seen since Shakespeare. And his imagination gave promise of an equal development. Ought we to sorrow for his

early death, or to be glad that we have in his works an eternal dawn of poesy, as in Shakespeare we have early morning and full day? Forever and forever shall we be able to bathe our temples in the cool dew which hangs upon his verse.

I love above all other reading the early letters of men of genius. In that struggling, hoping, confident time the world has not slipped in with its odious consciousness, its vulgar claim of confidantship, between them and their inspiration. In reading these letters I can recall my former self, full of an aspiration which had not learned how hard the hills of life are to climb, but thought rather to alight down upon them from its winged vantage-ground. Whose fulfilment has ever come nigh the glorious greatness of his yet never-balked youth? As we grow older, art becomes to us a definite faculty, instead of a boundless sense of power. Then we felt the wings burst from our shoulders; they were a gift and a triumph, and a bare flutter from twig to twig seemed aquiline to us; but now our vans, though broader grown and stronger, are matters of every day. We may reach our Promised Land; but it is far behind us in the Wilderness, in the early time of struggle, that we have left our Sinais and our personal talk with God in the bush. I think it fortunate to have dear friends far away. For not only does absence have something of the sanctifying privilege of death, but we dare speak in the little closet of a letter what we should not have the face to at the corner of the street, and the more of our confidence we give to another, the more are we ourselves enlarged. It is good also, on another account, to

pour ourselves out, for it gives room for other thoughts to be poured in. The mind and the heart must have this outlet or they would stagnate.

Something which I have said about "Keats's Life" reminds me of some verses which I wrote in 1839, and which I saved from a pretty general incremation of old lumber a few weeks ago. You will like to read them.

Sometimes the simplest word,
Though often heard
And heeded not,
The shadow of a bird
Flashing across a sunny spot,
A breath of air,
A bullock's low,
A smell of flowers,
Hath power to call from everywhere
The spirits of forgotten hours;
Hours when the heart was fresh and young,
When every string in freedom rung,
Ere life had shed one leaf of green,
And the cold earth had come between
The spirit and its right,
Blotting with a dull eclipse
The heavenly light
That gave a glory to the sight
And words of wonder to the sinless lips.

* * * * *

O glorious power!
O daily second birth!
Who the most lowly wayside flower
Canst clothe with might to make anew our earth,
And by a pebble small
Canst give us back our childhood's dower,
Break custom's freezing thrall
And to the wilted soul its lusty spring recall.

Here my balloon comes plump against *terra firma* again, and I am dragged about among squash and potato-vines and other such prosaic commodities—for I am reminded of the proof-sheets you sent me. I wish to keep them two or three days, and will leave all I have to say till I send them back. I only got them yesterday evening.

I am much overrun with proofs, as Bishop Hatto was with rats, and sometimes feel almost inclined to swear that I will never write anything again. I made such a resolve at the beginning of the summer, and here I am correcting the press for an anonymous satirist and for Mr. Hosea Biglow (no easy task to perform properly), and writing notes which I have no question that unscrupulous priest, Parson Wilbur, will palm upon the public for his own. Besides this I expect to print that other little narrative poem of "Sir Launfal," of which I spoke, and of which Page shall have his copy as soon as I have time. . . .

Your loving friend,

J. R. L.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, Sept., 1848.

My dear Sydney,—I suppose your readers will like a poem by way of variety—although I feel as if I were cheating you because it will not fill up so well as a proser would. The truth is, that I am so wearied out with Mr. Biglow and his tiresome (though wholly respectable) friend Mr. Wilbur, that I was obliged to "search my coffers round" for some sort of a tub to throw to you. This having to do with printers is dreadful business. There was a Mr. Melville who, I believe, enjoyed it, but, for my part, I am heartily sick of *Typee*.

When I get through with this job I shall devote more time to the *Standard.* The truth is that our position is so purely *destructive* that one must look at everything from a point of *criticism* which is wearisome. However, I warned you beforehand that I should not be worth my salt, and stipulated that the Society should be free to dismiss me whenever they got tired of me. It has been a good thing for me, for it has enabled me to get out of debt. I have got now money enough in the bank to pay my taxes, and five dollars in my pocket. Crœsus was no richer. . . .

Affectionately your friend,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Saturday, Oct., 1848.

My dear Sydney,—In future I will go into the *Standard* with my coat off. I expect to be free of Hosea in two days more. I should have sent this yesterday, but it was not written, and I was working like a dog all day, preparing a glossary and an *index.** If I ever make another glossary or index—! . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Wednesday, Oct. 4, 1848.

My dear Friend,—If it be not too late, strike out these four verses in "Miranda":

> There is one thing she owns in her own private right,
> It is native and genuine—namely her spite;

* To "The Biglow Papers."

When she acts as a censor, she privately blows
A censer of vanity, 'neath her own nose.

Also, if the note on pronunciation of Cowper's name be printed as prose, see that the rest are done in the same manner. I have not meddled with them in the proof, because I did not know about the other.

I send half the proof to-day—t'other to-morrow with Irving and Judd. I am *druv like all possessed.* I am keeping up with the printers with Wilbur's notes, glossary, index, and introduction. I have two sets of hands to satiate—one on the body of book, one on the extremities. I wish to see title-page and preface. . . .

More to-morrow.

Ever yours,

J. R. L.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, Saturday, Nov., 1848.

. . . Hosea is done with and will soon be out. It made fifty pages more than I expected and so took longer. I never found it so hard to write my *quota* for the *Standard.* I wish to *loaf.* . . .

TO THE SAME

Nov. 10, 1848.

. . . I shall send you a copy of Hosea in next week's *Liberator* bundle. It will be out, I suppose, to-day. So we are going to have Taylor * after all. Tell Briggs that I had not so much faith in the brutality of the people as he had. I suppose we shall have another cursed Missouri Compromise. . . .

* General Zachary Taylor, nominated for the Presidency.

TO THE SAME

Nov. 25, 1848.

. . . The first edition of Hosea is nearly exhausted already, and "Sir Launfal" is printed, and will be out in a week or so. . . .

TO THE SAME

Friday Morning, Dec. 1, 1848.

. . . Last night, just as I was sitting down (after the labors of Thanksgiving) to write my weekly allowance, a fire broke out in Cambridge and drew me down to the village, where I stayed till I saw the last of Willard's huge stables. I thought, as I came home between eleven and twelve, that I should be behindhand again this week; but this morning grace has been granted me to write the foregoing parable* in just two hours, and I have saved my bacon. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Dec. 20, 1848.

My dear Sydney,—I intended, when I sent my last *quota*, to write to you next day; but one of the many lions which haunt letter-writers got in my path, and the fulfilment of my design has been put off till to-day, when all that I had to say has pretty much evaporated.

I was amazingly tickled with your letter. As Wendell Holmes said to me about the "Biglow Papers," "it made me wriggle all over." If it could only be printed in

* The poem entitled "A Parable," which begins, "Said Christ our Lord, 'I will go and see.'"

the *Standard*, it would be universally hailed as the best thing that ever was in it. . . .

I told you and the Executive Committee honestly before I began that they were setting me about a business for which I was not fitted. I feel as if the whole of them were looking over my shoulder whenever I sit down to write, and it quite paralyzes me. Here they are, like so many Californian immigrants, raking and sifting and pickaxing and hoeing and shovelling and dredging and scratching (and, I fear, damning) my brains, and getting nothing but iron pyrites after all. The first Horsford* that tests me will find me out, and the game will be up. Only when I send you a poem I feel as if I were making some sort of restitution. I have sent you some of which neither you nor I need be ashamed. I am afraid to think of what I gave them for the *Liberty Bell*. I half-parodied it to myself as I went along, of which the following is a sufficient specimen, and will make you laugh when you see the original:

> "By God's just judgment I am damned!"
> With a loud voice he cried,
> And then his coffin-lid he slammed,
> And bolted it inside.

As for your articles being fathered upon me, I am glad to hear it, and, if we ever quarrel, I shall hope that you will keep forgetting to put my initials after mine. Your notice of the "Biglow Papers" was the best one they have had. More than that, however, it was good

* Professor of chemistry.

in itself. It was rather a ticklish job to notice them at all, and something like stroking a hedgehog, after I had fenced them round so with preliminary notices. As a general thing (I must confess) the notices have *not* been favorable. But I am quite satisfied with seeing the feathers fly. The first edition (1500) were all gone in a week—so that the book was actually out of print before a second edition could be struck off from the plates. If the relative positions of author and publisher were established on a proper footing, I ought to have cleared at least $400 by these two editions. As it is, I shall make $250, from which something like $200 will be deducted to pay for my stereotype plates. This, however, will also cover the printing of "Sir Launfal," which was published Monday. (Don't think from the staggering look of my handwriting that I have taken to eating opium. I strike out three hundred strokes with a pair of 24-lb. dumb-bells every morning and evening, and my hand generally trembles for an hour or two after.)

Your notice of the "Fable" was the best one I have seen. I believe there are not above half a dozen persons who know how good it is, and you and I make two out of these six. I think I shall write something yet that will make us laugh. As for the "Fable," I speak of it as it appeared to me when it was first written. It seems bald and poor enough now, the Lord knows. But Briggs must give you a copy of the second edition, in which the atrocious misprints of the other will be corrected, and to which I have prefixed a new preface.

. . . By all means bring your boy up a non-resistant, my dear Sydney, if you wish to retain any authority over him. Teach him to heap coals of fire on your head by passive obedience, and get him early accustomed to the birch. Cut down all the ailanthi and plant birch-trees. It will pay in the end. The ailanthus is brittle and of no practical efficacy. Depend upon it, children have gone so far in this generation that they will be breeching their fathers in the next, unless vigorous and early measures be taken.

Affectionately yours,
J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Dec. 22, 1848.

. . . I send something this week rather alien (in appearance) to your denouncing and excoriating columns, but which has, nevertheless, its appropriateness. Console yourself that it has found out something new to abuse, and be thankful that the circle of philanthropy is enlarging. Next week I expect to send verses.

I shall send you "Sir Launfal" in a day or two. I could not get copies enough yesterday. To-day our first winter has set in with a tremendous north-easterly snow-storm. It is Forefathers' Day, you remember.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Saturday Morning.

. . . I open my letter to send you the enclosed article which I wrote "whether or no," thinking you might be short of copy. If I find the package doesn't weigh too much, I shall enclose also two articles from the *Daily*

News, in which I have corrected a misprint or two. I wish you to be neighborly and let me know what you are most in want of, and I will supply it if possible. . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Friday Morning, Dec., 1848.

My dear Friend,—Last night . . . I walked to Watertown over the snow with the new moon before me and a sky exactly like that in Page's evening landscape. Orion was rising behind me, and, as I stood on the hill just before you enter the village, the stillness of the fields around me was delicious, broken only by the tinkle of a little brook which runs too swiftly for Frost to catch it. My picture of the brook in "Sir Launfal" was drawn from it. But why do I send you this description—like the bones of a chicken I had picked? Simply because I was so happy as I stood there, and felt so sure of doing something that would justify my friends. But why do I not say that I *have* done something? I believe that I have done better than the world knows yet, but the past seems so little compared with the future. . . . I am the first poet who has endeavored to express the American Idea, and I shall be popular by and by. Only I suppose I must be dead first. But I do not want anything more than I have. Never had poet better friends, and never poet loved them better. . . .

If you ever see Bartlett, the Americanisms man, I wish you would tell him that I made a good many notes in reading his book, which shall be at his service

for a second edition if he likes. I know *Yankee*, if I know nothing else.

I shall write you a letter next week.

God bless you,
J. R. L.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Friday, Jan. 5, 1849.

. . . Don't you like the poem * I sent you last week? I was inclined to think pretty well of it, but I have not seen it in print yet. The little mill stands in a valley between one of the spurs of Wellington Hill and the main summit, just on the edge of Waltham. It is surely one of the loveliest spots in the world. It is one of my lions, and if you will make me a visit this spring I will take you up to hear it roar, and I will show you "the oaks"—the largest, I fancy, left in the country. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Feb. 26, 1849.

. . . It was not because I had taken a miff that I did not subjoin any private communication to the last few weekly sheets for the *Standard*, but simply because I had just time to save the mail, which closes at the inconvenient hour of 1 o'clock. My own house has too many vitreous points about it to allow me to think of throwing any stones.

If ever letter deserved the name of providential raven it was your last. Not for its blackness, nor for any the least unpleasantness in its note, but for the supply it

* "Beaver Brook."

brought to a famishing man. Though I am now a middle-aged man, having accomplished my thirtieth year on the 22d of this month, my constitution is still vigorous enough to be able to bear a draft. I think I could sit exposed to such as yours all day long without taking cold.

The truth is, that I have just been able to keep my head above water; but there is a hole in my life-preserver, and what wind I can raise from your quarter generally comes just in season to make up for leakage and save me from total submersion. Since the day after I received your remittance for December I have literally not had a copper, except a small sum which I borrowed. It was all spent before I got it. So is all the last one, too. As long as I have money I don't think anything about it, except to fancy my present stock inexhaustible and capable of buying up the world; but when I have it not, I entertain lawless and uncertain thoughts. I question those fallacious distinctions of *meum* and *tuum* which lie at the foundation of all right of property in the present social state. I become ferociously radical, and look upon Abbott Lawrence with communistic eyes. My dear friend, if you would keep alive in me those fine feelings of superiority which belong to and characterize the gentleman, send your next draft without delay.

It is entirely my own fault that I am always in straits. I might have had $250 in my pocket at this minute from the sale of my last two books. But I had already taken up near $100 in cash and books, and my bill for stereotyping (which I pay myself) is $225. There were

a great many alterations of spelling made in the plates of the "Biglow Papers," which added much to the expense. I ought not to have stereotyped at all. But we are never done with cutting eye-teeth. When I reflect on the dangers incident to dentition, and the incredible number of those teeth I have cut, I wonder that I am alive at this minute. It is no wonder, with such a supply of canines, that I should have become carnivorous again. Should not I be a terrible fellow if I became hydrophobic? This is a temperance consideration that never before occurred to me.

Don't be getting up a subscription for my relief, however, for I shall be easy enough in good time. I can get along without money as well as any man I ever heard of. Indeed, were it not for the recurrence of the 1st of January, and a foolish curiosity which infests tradesmen at that season in regard to one's solvency, I should never have any trouble. My great happiness is that I married Maria; my great unhappiness, that I married the daughter of the late A. White, Esq. I cannot shake off the imputation of being rich. This is the ruin of me. I am positively beflead with runaway slaves who wish to buy their wives. They cut and come again. I have begun to fancy that polygamy is not unusual among them. What can I do? We, in principle, deny the right of compensation. But if a man comes and asks us to help him buy a wife or child, what are we to do? I cannot stand such an appeal. So, when I have money I give something; when I have none I subscribe, to be paid when I have. And I never can tell whether they are speaking truth or not. There is a fellow in

Cambridge who blacks boots, etc., for students, who in vacation takes up the profession of runaway (at least he has once), and raises money to buy imaginary (or at least superfluous, for he has one in Cambridge) wives, and children yet unborn and unbegotten even. On the whole, these things heighten one's zeal against slavery.

I will macerate myself. I will keep *lent*, so that I may never more be under the necessity of borrowing. I have a whoreson appearance of health and good spirits which infects men with a false opinion of my prosperity. They will have me rich. I say I have no money, and they smile with respectful incredulity. Unfortunately it is not my temper to reap any satisfaction from this imputed righteousness. Perhaps I should bear riches with resignation. I think few of us would hold an umbrella (at any rate right side up) against a golden shower. But, not to mention *tin*, I have not *brass* enough to be rich. A consciousness of external superiority to other men is painful to me. I never could ride in a two-horse coach with any comfort. I am afraid to meet the eyes of passers-by. I know they detect me as an impostor at once. On the other hand, I drive my father's venerable "September" (my senior by several years) with entire satisfaction. I am certain to be rather pitied than envied even by the shabbiest pedestrians. How shall I escape this odious accusation of wealth? I am certain that I am suspected of being miserly by the very fellow to whom, perhaps, I have given my last cent, and whose greasy, corpulent pocket-book almost makes a Eugene Aram of me. It is this that has made me feel uncomfortably in being paid by the Anti-Slavery

Society, though my receipts from that source are all that have enabled me to keep Maria's property entire, which I am resolved to do at all events. . . .

As ever, affectionately your friend,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, March 9, 1849.

. . . Your remittance came most seasonably, but I hope that you did not pinch yourself for it. I take it that you need money more than I do—for I have no rent to pay. I suppose my letter was more desponding than it should have been. I am not very often down in the mouth; but sometimes, at the end of a year, when I have done a tolerable share of work and have nothing to show for it, I feel as if I had rather be a spruce clerk on India Wharf than a man of letters. Regularly I look forward to New Year and think that I shall begin the next January out of debt, and as regularly I am disappointed. However, it stirs one up, and I am going to work hard this spring. . . .

We are as well as could be expected, considering that a skunk was shot in our back-kitchen this morning. There were two of these "essence-pedlers," as the Yankees call them, gambolling there the night before. . . .

TO THE SAME

MAY DAY, [1849?]

Move eastward, Sydney Gay, and leave
  Each damp exchange untorn apart;
Brush off such tear-drops with your sleeve,
  O Sydney Gay, as needs must start;

To Boston east; then west until
You see the Charles obscure with grit
Washed from the dreary gravel-pit,
The gravel-pit of Simon's Hill.

Still west to where the pine and elm
And other trees (of choicest kinds)
With a leaf-deluge half o'erwhelm
A yellowish house with dark-green blinds;
There at the ponderous knocker bang
Until the baby 'gins to roar,
Then find the bell, unseen before,
And bid the useless bronze go hang.

Soon through the entry you will hear
The tramp as of a hippopot-
amus, and Biddy, blundering-hot,
Tries the huge lock at front and rear;
She, failing in her wild desire,
Back through the hall her thunder rolls
And Mary calls, and both (poor souls!)
At bolt and lock in vain perspire.

Meanwhile you, waiting, mutter "Zounds!"
And Lizzie on the step sinks down;
The baby gains a hundred pounds,
And you feel aches from sole to crown;
Then, like a charging troop of horse,
Comes Bridget rumbling down the stairs,
Adds all her Irish skill to theirs,
And makes the matter ten times worse.

In attic high beneath the roof
A handsome youth with Vandyke hair
And beard (the *Standard* is my proof)
Hears far below the loud despair;

Descending, he those hussies three
Bids instantly to go to pot,
Swiftly cuts through the Gordian knot,
And makes the rescued entrance free.

"Sydney, my boy, and is it you?
And, Lizzie, can I trust my eyes?
That prodigy of babies too?
Come in, come in at once," he cries:
"Take off your things, and feel at home."
Then to himself: "The merest dab!
Incredible that they should come
To match that child with marvellous Mab!"

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, May 21, 1849.

My dear Sydney,—You give me credit for too much temper or too little philosophy. I am truly sorry that you should have felt any uneasiness on my account. Look at it simply as a matter of money—not of feeling. I lose two hundred and fifty dollars a year, but I think it will be all the better for me, since I shall be obliged to work in some other way to supply the *hiatus*. Besides, I had, with a most preternatural foresight (and thereto inspired, I must believe, by my Demon), already bought a ream of ruled foolscap and a bunch of quills (with one of which I now, to my own great satisfaction, am writing), so that you see my literary garrison is provisioned and ammunitioned for a long siege. Ravens, my dear Sydney, of one sort or another, will be sent before the year is out, I am certain. As for the Executive Committee, shall I cry out against them as against another Jerusalem that has made away with half my

profits? I am somewhat philosophical, very good-natured, and know my own limits with tolerable exactness (I am not concerned in this place to catalogue my faults, of which, also, one's friends commonly need no enumeration), so that I am sufficiently well bucklered against a wound in that immedicable part—Vanity.

All through the year I have felt that I worked under a disadvantage. I have missed that inspiration (or call it magnetism) which flows into one from a thoroughly sympathetic audience. Properly speaking, I have never had it as an author, for I have never been popular. But then I have never needed it, because I wrote to please myself and not to please the people; whereas, in writing for the *Standard*, I have felt that I ought in some degree to admit the whole Executive Committee into my workshop, and defer as much as possible to the opinion of persons whose opinion (however valuable on a point of morals) would not properly weigh a pin with me on an æsthetic question. I have felt that I ought to work in my own way, and yet I have also felt that I ought to *try* to work in *their* way, so that I have failed of working in either. Nevertheless, I think that the Executive Committee would have found it hard to get some two or three of the poems I have furnished from any other quarter.

When it was first proposed to me, I felt uncomfortable at the thought of accepting a salary. Hitherto, if I had served at the altar of Freedom, it was as one who brought an offering, not as one of the priests who fed upon the offerings of others. But it is always too easy to reconcile ourselves to that which increases our com-

fort, and I thought, moreover, that I had in some sort a right to that priestly style of aliment, since I should not have needed it had I written hymns to Baal instead of to the one God. I do not say it as a matter of merit, but surely I might have been a popular and thriving author could I have consented to be a little less *myself*.

I do not measure myself with any man, but I said (you remember) at first that Edmund Quincy would answer their purpose better than I. I also said that I wished them to put an end to their engagement with me as soon as they wished or found it convenient. How then can I feel offended in any the slightest degree? I do not blame Foster or Philbrick or Jackson for not being satisfied with me; but, on the other hand, I thank God that he has gradually taught me to be quite satisfied with *them*. The longer I live the more convinced am I that we must (in our mental cabinet of natural history) enlarge the *genera* of our *species Homo*. I am willing to accept all kinds of men, even wicked ones among the rest (but do not tell this to the Executive Committee or you will ruin me), and to think that Zachary Taylors are no more out of the order of nature than Henry C. Wrights are.

I think Foster is employed in his proper calling, though perhaps he would be less zealous in it if he read the lessons of history with a clearer eye. All men are not George Foxes, nor, indeed, is it possible that there should ever be a second. I say I think Foster properly enough employed, but I lament to see so exuberant an activity and so hearty and robust an intelligence as that of Pillsbury thrown away. Why do such

men forget that we are not Hebrews, nor live in Judea, nor have Edomites and Philistines on our borders, nor are watching fearfully the growth of Egypt on the one hand and of Assyria on the other? It appears to me that the Hebrew prophets have narrowed all the prophets since. The American prophet must be a very different sort of person. And Wendell Phillips, too, born and gifted with all the physical requisites for a politician—a ποιμήν λαῶν—why does he throw away his crook and dream of nonconformists and Hampdens nowadays?

You know that I never agreed to the Dissolution-of-the-Union movement, and simply because I think it a waste of strength. Why do we not separate ourselves from the African whom we wish to elevate? from the drunkard? from the ignorant? At this minute the song of the bobolink comes rippling through my open window and preaches peace. Two months ago the same missionary was in his South Carolina pulpit, and can I think that he chose another text or delivered another sermon there? Hath not a slaveholder hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same summer and winter as an abolitionist is? If you prick them do they not bleed? If you tickle them do they not laugh? If you poison them do they not die? If you wrong them shall they not revenge? Nay, I will go a step farther, and ask if all this do not apply to parsons also? Even *they* are human.

The longer I live the more am I convinced that the world must be healed by degrees. I see why Jesus

Wm. Lloyd Phillips.

came eating meat and drinking wine and companying with publicans and sinners. He preached the highest doctrine, but he lived the life of other men. And was it not in order that his personality might be a bridge between their lower natures and his higher ideas? Let us sow the best seed we have, my dear Sydney, and convert other men by our crops, not by drubbing them with our hoes or putting them under our harrows. Above all, let us not *preach* about the bright side of human nature and *look* always at the dark. Heaven help us! we all revolve around God with larger or lesser orbits, but we all likewise turn upon our own axes, and sometimes one half of us is in the light, sometimes the other. I have felt as if I were *all* black sometimes, but it was only because my diseased consciousness had absconded into my æsthetic hemisphere.

Well, I have been defining my position, perhaps more to my own satisfaction than to yours, but I will release you presently. This quill-pen runs over the paper so glibly that it is a pleasure to write with it—especially when one is talking about one's self.

I feel that I am called on to do one thing more. I wish to release the Executive Committee from all fetters of delicacy, and accordingly I throw up our engagement altogether. Let them feel no scruple about any offence that *I* am likely to take. So much I think is due to my own independence—or call it pride if you will. But now, on the other hand, I owe something to my *dependence* also. A tremor runs through my Penates. If the Executive Committee *wish* me to write once a fortnight, I am willing to do it. But if they only make

that proposal to break my fall, I should choose to decline it. . . .

I should be sorry to see the *Standard* hauled down, and chiefly on your account, my dear Sydney, and Lizzie's, and the young Campeador's. You have edited the paper excellently. A little hot, now and then, but wonderfully little mustard, considering the palates you were dressing your salads for. If they do not appreciate you the fault is theirs, not yours. But, at any rate, in five years one strikes down a good many roots. It would be hard for you to be pulled up; harder, perhaps, to take root again elsewhere, and accordingly I hope that the *Standard* will wave on its present editorial staff for many years longer. I should have preferred that the $250 should have gone to you, and, indeed, I had all along entertained a fancy that, in case my income were increased from any other quarter, I would surrender half on condition that it should go to the resident editor. Never mind. There is more than one kind of benevolence. There are some men who never put their hands in their pockets, who yet give away a great deal in their faces and manners. And if the drunkenness of wine brings out the true wish and motive of the heart, shall not the intoxication of reverie do the same?

I do not know what I have written, but I will end by copying some verses intended for an editor who continually put my poems in his paper and underrated me.

I did not bid you to my board,
  But you were welcome with the rest.
All that my poor house could afford
  I gave you freely, gave my best.

You tasted this and smelt of that
And growled and wished you had not come,
Yet stuffed into your greasy hat
Enough to feed the weans at home.

A beaker full of nectar clear
I brimmed for you; you drank it up,
And "Does he mean to call *this* beer?"
You muttered, belching in your cup.

When next you chance to pass my way,
Good friend, your dainty palate spare.
"My cookery likes you not," you say,
Nor me your manners; we are square.

Now, I don't mean to apply this to the Executive Committee, though I was reminded of it and copied it (I have carried it in my head hitherto and never wrote it before) to fill my sheet. But the antislavery folks have certainly had the use of my pen in more ways than one, and they must not grumble at the way I hold it.

Nevertheless, if they wish to have me continue to write once a fortnight, I will try to do better than hitherto. That is, I will think less of them and let myself *go*, and not keep reining up for fear of this or that one's fence.

Love to Lizzie, and believe me as ever

Affectionately yours,
J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

June, 1849.

I had written about twice as much, but I send the best. The thermometer has been for three days at 98°, and what can a man do, especially in haying? This

morning I was pitching hay before you were up, and day before yesterday I pitched "risin' o' teu (two) ton" in a hot sun (thermometer 86° in the shade). I tell you what, "intellectual labor," as the parsons call it, is too much. I suppose you cannot help estimating quality *somewhat* by quantity; I should in your place with as many columns to fill, and that is the reason I always apologize for anything short, though it may be all the better for it. . . .

TO CHARLES R. LOWELL*

Elmwood, June 11, 1849.

My dear Charlie,—I have had so much to do in the way of writing during the past week that I have not had time sooner to answer your letter, which came to me in due course of mail, and for which I am much obliged to you.

I am very glad to hear that you are enjoying yourself so much, and also that the poor musquash dug faster than you did. I was not so long ago a boy as not to remember what sincere satisfaction there is in a good ducking, and how the spirit of maritime adventure is

* Born in 1834, died Oct. 20, 1864, of wounds received the previous day at the battle of Cedar Creek. Of him General Sheridan said, "He was the perfection of a man and a soldier." It was of him that his uncle wrote, in *The Biglow Papers*,

> "Wut's words to them whose faith an' truth
> On War's red techstone rang true metal,
> Who ventered life an' love an' youth
> Fur the gret prize o' death in battle?
> To him who, deadly hurt, agin
> Flashed on afore the charge's thunder,
> Tippin' with fire the bolt of men
> That rived the Rebel line asunder."

ministered to by a raft which will not float. I congratulate you on both experiences.

And now let me assume the privilege of my uncleship to give you a little advice. Let me counsel you to make use of all your visits to the country as opportunities for an education which is of great importance, which town-bred boys are commonly lacking in, and which can never be so cheaply acquired as in boyhood. Remember that a man is valuable in our day for what he *knows*, and that his company will always be desired by others in exact proportion to the amount of intelligence and instruction he brings with him. I assure you that one of the earliest pieces of definite knowledge we acquire after we have become men is this—that our company will be desired no longer than we honestly pay our proper share in the general reckoning of mutual entertainment. A man who knows more than another knows *incalculably* more, be sure of that, and a person with eyes in his head cannot look even into a pigsty without learning something that will be useful to him at one time or another. Not that we should educate ourselves for the mere selfish sake of that advantage of superiority which it will give us. But knowledge is power in this noblest sense, that it enables us to *benefit* others and to pay our way honorably in life by being of *use*.

Now, when you are at school in Boston you are furnishing your brain with what can be obtained from books. You are training and enriching your intellect. While you are in the country you should remember that you are in the great school of the senses. Train

your eyes and ears. Learn to know all the trees by their bark and leaves, by their general shape and manner of growth. Sometimes you can be able to say positively what a tree is *not* by simply examining the lichens on the bark, for you will find that particular varieties of lichen love particular trees. Learn also to know all the birds by sight, by their notes, by their manner of flying; all the animals by their general appearance and gait or the localities they frequent.

You would be ashamed not to know the name and use of every piece of furniture in the house, and we ought to be as familiar with every object in the world —which is only a larger kind of house. You recollect the pretty story of Pizarro and the Peruvian Inca: how the Inca asked one of the Spaniards to write the word *Dio* (God) upon his thumb-nail, and then, showing it to the rest, found only Pizarro unable to read it! Well, you will find as you grow older that this same name of God is written all over the world in little phenomena that occur under our eyes every moment, and I confess that I feel very much inclined to hang my head with Pizarro when I cannot translate these hieroglyphics into my own vernacular.

Now, I write all this to you, my dear Charlie, not in the least because it is considered proper for uncles to bore their nephews with musty moralities and advice; but I should be quite willing that you should think me a bore, if I could only be the means of impressing upon you the importance of *observing*, and the great fact that we cannot properly observe till we have learned *how*. Education, practice, and especially a determination not to

be satisfied with remarking that side of an object which happens to catch our eye first when we first see it—these gradually make an observer. The faculty, once acquired, becomes at length another sense which works mechanically.

I think I have sometimes noticed in you an *impatience* of mind which you should guard against carefully. Pin this maxim up in your memory—that Nature abhors the credit system, and that we never get anything in life till we have paid for it. Anything good, I mean; evil things we always pay for afterwards, and always when we find it hardest to do it. By paying for them, of course, I mean *laboring* for them. Tell me how much good solid *work* a young man has in him, and I will erect a horoscope for him as accurate as Guy Mannering's for young Bertram. Talents are absolutely nothing to a man except he have the faculty of work along with them. They, in fact, turn upon him and worry him, as Actæon's dogs did—you remember the story? Patience and perseverance—these are the sails and the rudder even of genius, without which it is only a wretched hulk upon the waters.

It is not fair to look a gift horse in the mouth, unless, indeed, it be a wooden horse, like that which carried the Greeks into Troy; but my lecture on patience and *finish* was apropos of your letter, which was more careless in its chirography and (here and there) in its composition than I liked. Always make a thing as good as you can. Otherwise it was an excellent letter, because it told what you had seen and what you were doing —certainly better as a *letter* than this of mine, which is

rather a sermon. But read it, my dear Charlie, as the advice of one who takes a sincere interest in you. I hope to hear from you again, and my answer to your next shall be more entertaining.

I remain your loving uncle,

J. R. Lowell.

TO JAMES T. FIELDS

Elmwood, Oct. 14, 1849.

My dear Sir,— . . . The reason I did not sooner answer your first note was, that I have an unfortunate unconsciousness of the lapse of time. I believe that I was born after my seasonable date, and that I was meant for an Antediluvian, for a month seems no more to me than the while between getting up and breakfast. I had a notion of writing something new for your "Book," * and kept turning over in my head an essay upon Commencement as it used to be, till—behold, October!

As for "The First Client," I have read it over, and I confess it seems to me pretty poor stuff. I think something more creditable to me as a moral and intellectual being (as Dr. Ware used to say) might be selected.

Why can't you come out some afternoon and spend an evening with me? Say Monday. If you find it dull, you can escape in the omnibus, or, if you please, I can give you a bed and you can have a country morning before you are bricked up again in Boston.

* Mr. Fields was editing "The Boston Book," made up of a selection from the writings of Boston authors. "The First Client" was the name of a short story by Lowell, published originally in 1842, in the *Boston Miscellany*.

We can talk over that and other matters by the light of a cigar. I will be at home Monday, at any rate, and you would be pretty sure to find me any afternoon but Wednesday.

I remain very sincerely (and dilatorily)
Your friend,
J. R. Lowell.

TO MRS. FRANCIS G. SHAW

Elmwood, Nov. 25, 1849.

. . . I am glad you like my poems. I wish I did—that is, I wish they were better. And I think they will be one of these days when I have written better ones to cast back an enlightening glow on the old. But I am not flattered by your liking. You like them because Page does, and, between ourselves, that is his weakest point, as you, I see, with your woman's wit have discovered. Page is wiser than you, and likes them because he knows I am better than they, which you do not. . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Nov. 25, 1849.

. . . My new edition will be out about the 10th of December, and I think that with Ticknor's publishing I shall, for the first time, make something by my poems. I shall clear at least $100 by the first edition, and every subsequent one will be clear gain, as I shall have no expense about the plates. I expect to publish a wholly new volume in May, about which I shall write you in some other letter. I write this in haste, merely to show that I have not forgotten nor ceased to love you.

How soon I shall come to New York is uncertain. I am expecting a visit from Miss Bremer. Mr. Downing wrote me a note, saying how much she, etc., etc., about me, and so Maria wrote and asked her to tarry with us a short time. She wrote a charming letter in reply, and will be with us in the course of next week. . . .

I think you will find my poems improved in the new edition. I have not altered much, but I have left out the poorest and put others in their places. My next volume, I think, will show an advance. It is to be called "The Nooning."* Now guess what it will be. The name suggests pleasant thoughts, does it not? But I shall not tell you anything about it yet, and you must not mention it. . . .

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, Dec. 22, 1849.

. . . Print *that*† as if you loved it. Let not a comma be blundered. Especially I fear they will put "*gleaming*" for "*gloaming*" in the first line unless you look to it. May you never have the key which shall unlock the whole meaning of the poem to you! . . .

* The design for a volume with this title was not carried out, though cherished for many years. See the prefatory note to "Fitzadam's Story" in "Heartsease and Rue."

† "The First Snow-Fall."

Engvd. by Forrest, from a Sketch by Fredrika Bremer.

F. B.
1851.

PUTNAM'S MONTHLY PORTRAITS.

Author of "The White Hills in October" &c.

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III

1850–1856

DOMESTIC SORROW AND JOY.—VISIT TO EUROPE.—DEATH OF HIS SON AT ROME.—DECLINE OF MRS. LOWELL'S HEALTH.—RETURN TO AMERICA.—DEATH OF MRS. LOWELL.—LECTURES ON THE ENGLISH POETS.—APPOINTMENT TO PROFESSORSHIP IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY.—SECOND VISIT TO EUROPE.

LETTERS TO C. F. BRIGGS, E. M. DAVIS, S. H. GAY, FRANCIS G. SHAW, C. E. NORTON, MISS ANNA LORING, F. H. UNDERWOOD, MISS JANE NORTON, W. J. STILLMAN, JAMES T. FIELDS, JOHN HOLMES, DR. ESTES HOWE, MRS. ESTES HOWE.

THE happiness of Lowell's domestic life was a second time rudely broken in upon by the death of his little daughter Rose, in the spring of 1850—just three years after the death of her sister Blanche. These sorrows told heavily upon him, and still more upon his wife, whose health was always delicate and uncertain. They were made happy, at the end of the year, by the birth of a son, Walter, who became soon a child of uncommon loveliness and promise. Their circumstances were now such that they resolved to go to Europe in the summer of 1851, not without hope that the voyage and travel would be of benefit to Mrs. Lowell. Except to his father, Lowell wrote few letters during their absence. Some record

of their voyage and of their life in Italy is to be found in "Leaves from My Journal in Italy and Elsewhere,"* but there is no reference in the published narrative to the calamity which fell upon them in Rome, in the spring of 1852, in the death of their little boy. It was a grievous blow, and one from which Mrs. Lowell never recovered. They remained abroad till the autumn. The next year was passed very quietly at home. Mrs. Lowell's health sank steadily, and on October 27, 1853, she died.

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Jan. 23, 1850.

My dear Friend,—I have never thanked you for your gift of a box of cigars. I am smoking one of them at this very moment. I know not in what light to regard them other than as a kind of parishioner's gift to the Rev. Mr. Wilbur, though there may be a covert satire in thus throwing that gentleman's weakness into his very teeth. My great-grandfather, who was minister of Newbury, and who, being very much of a gentleman and scholar, held out against Whitefield and his extravagances, used to take (I have no doubt) the grocer's share of his salary in tobacco. He was a terrible smoker, and there is still extant in the house he lived in at Newbury a painted panel representing a meeting of the neighboring clergy, each with his pipe and his — pot.† I have a great regard for this excellent man's memory, strengthened by his note-books and by his

* First published in 1854 in "Fireside Travels," and now to be found in the first volume of Lowell's Prose Writings.

† This interesting old panel was afterwards transferred to Elmwood, and set above the mantelpiece in the study.

portrait in gown, bands, and wig, painted (alas!) by one of his parishioners. Therefore I scruple not to thank you for this compliance with my weakness, and feel that I have an ancestral right to pronounce the cigars excellent. . . .

. . . My "new book" is to be called "The Nooning." Maria invented the title for me, and is it not a pleasant one? My plan is this. I am going to bring together a party of half a dozen old friends at Elmwood. They go down to the river and bathe, and then one proposes that they shall go up into a great willow-tree (which stands at the end of the causey near our house, and has seats in it) to take their nooning. There they agree that each shall tell a story or recite a poem of some sort. In the tree they find a countryman already resting himself, who enters into the plan and tells a humorous tale, with touches of Yankee character and habits in it. *I* am to read my poem of the "Voyage of Leif" to Vinland, in which I mean to bring my hero straight into Boston Bay, as befits a Bay-state poet. Two of my poems are already written — one "The Fountain of Youth" (no connection with any other firm), and the other an "Address to the Muse," by the Transcendentalist of the party. I guess I am safe in saying that the first of these two is the best thing I have done yet. But you shall judge when you see it. But "Leif's Voyage" is to be far better. I intend to confute my critics, not with another satire, but by writing better. It is droll that they should say I want variety. Between "Columbus" and Hosea Biglow I think there is some range and some variety of power shown. I cannot help think-

ing that my countrymen will wake up some day and find that they have got a poet. But no matter; do you keep on believing in me, and I shall justify you if I live. I feel that I am very young for a man of thirty, and that I have not by any means got my growth. My poems hitherto have been a true record of my life, and I mean that they shall continue to be. As Alcott said to me the other day, they contain a great deal of *history*. The public have not yet learned to look beyond the titles of them at their meaning. As soon as the wise world is satisfied that I am a poet, I think it will find more in them than it suspected. This is all as it ought to be, and I am writing about it to you as to one who thinks more of me than I do of myself; though, of course, if I did not believe that I was a poet, I should not write a line. The world is right, too, after its own fashion, for I am perfectly conscious that I have not yet got the best of my poetry out of me. What I have written will need to be carried down to posterity on the shoulders of better poems written hereafter, and strong enough to carry the ore in the stone which imbeds it. My dear friend—and you are very dear—I am *not* a fool, at any rate, and I know my own wants and faults a great deal better than any of my critics.

I begin to feel that I must enter on a new year of my apprenticeship. My poems have thus far had a regular and natural sequence. First, Love and the mere happiness of existence beginning to be conscious of itself, then Freedom—both being the sides which Beauty presented to me—and now I am going to try more *wholly* after Beauty herself. Next, if I live, I shall try to pre-

sent Life as I have seen it. In the "Nooning" I shall have not even a glance towards Reform. If the poems I have already written are good for anything they are perennial, and it is tedious as well as foolish to repeat one's self. I have preached sermons enow, and now I am going to come down out of the pulpit and *go about among my parish.* I shall turn my barrel over and read my old discourses; it will be time to write new ones when my hearers have sucked all the meaning out of those old ones. Certainly I shall not grind for any Philistines, whether Reformers or Conservatives. I find that Reform cannot take up the whole of me, and I am quite sure that eyes were given us to look about us with sometimes, and not to be always looking forward. If some of my good red-hot friends were to see this they would call me a backslider, but there are other directions in which one may get away from people beside the rearward one. Thus I have taken an observation whereby to indicate to you my present mental and moral latitude and longitude. As well as I can judge, I am farther eastward or nearer morning than ever hitherto. Am I as tedious as a king?

I am not certain that my next appearance will not be in a pamphlet on the Hungarian question in answer to the *North American Review.* But I shall not write anything if I can help it. I am tired of controversy, and though I have cut out the oars with which to row up my friend Bowen, yet I have enough to do, and, besides, am not so well as usual, being troubled in my head as I was summer before last. I should like to play for a year, and after I have written and printed the "Nooning," I

mean to *take* a nooning and lie under the trees looking at the sky.

Fredrika Bremer stayed three weeks with us, and I do not *like* her, I *love* her. She is one of the most beautiful persons I have ever known—so clear, so simple, so right-minded and -hearted, and so full of judgment. I believe she liked us, too, and had a good time. . . .

With all love,

J. R. L.

TO EDWARD M. DAVIS

"Elmwood, Jan. 24, 1850.

. . . I am much obliged to you for the letter of O. J. which you sent, though, as for the "knockings," I have no manner of faith in them. I do not believe that men are to be thumped into a conception of the spiritual world, or that O. J.'s father, if he had anything to say to his son, would take such a roundabout way as that of going to Mrs. Fish or Miss Fox. Moreover, when the spirits can say what they please to these two women, why do they not use them as spokes-women, instead of using so clumsy a shift as "calling for the alphabet," and then rapping their news? My dear Edward, if the spirits are so wise that they can foretell the future (as in O. J.'s case), why are they so stupid in their contrivances for making themselves intelligible? Depend upon it, there is no *more* humbug in the spiritual world than in this. It would be a parallel case if I, who am able to write you my thoughts plainly and directly, should adopt some system of cryptography and gave you the key of it, so that you would be half a day in making out what need have taken only ten minutes.

And this would be still more ridiculous if I had only some such fact to communicate as that my coat was brown, or that I ate an egg with my breakfast. I have seen persons who could make a "mysterious knocking" by snapping one of their joints in and out. I think we may be sure of this, that God never takes needless trouble. It is only foolish little men that are fond of mysteries and fusses. Then, why should a spirit know anything about the future?

I have only time to write a few suggestions. These "spirits" tell us, it seems, what we already know, nothing else. As for Elias Hicks and George Fox and St. Paul, I could tell O. J. such a story as that without any trouble, and throw him in a few more saints to boot. . . .

Most affectionately,

J. R. L.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, March 17, 1850.

My dear Sydney,—I believe you can understand why I was so unmannerly as to put off so long an answer to your kind letter from Hingham. I was so dull—not well either in body or mind. So it came to the same thing, for if you thought me a hog for my silence, you would have thought me a bore had I broken it.

It was really a great disappointment to me not to see you while you were here. But I knew nothing of your visit until after I had supposed you had gone back, or I should certainly have made an effort to see you. I sympathized most heartily with you in the loss of your brother, but I knew well that there is no such

thing as consolation. To change the old Latin—not ignorant of grief, I know to let the unhappy alone. Time is clearly the only lenitive, and, if not Lethe, it yet softens all wounds except those of conscience. And, no matter how self-sustained the soul may be, there are bodily horrors and shocks connected with Death which leave a deep mark. Can anything be more hateful than the ceremonies which follow in his train, like a sort of hired mourners whom you long to kick? I shall never forget the feeling I had when little Blanche's coffin was brought into the house. It was refreshed again lately. But for Rose I would have no funeral; my father only made a prayer, and then I walked up alone to Mount Auburn and saw her body laid by her sister's.

She was a very lovely child—we think the loveliest of our three. She was more like Blanche than Mabel, and her disease was the same. Her illness lasted a week, but I never had any hope, so that she died to me the first day the doctor came. She was very beautiful—fair, with large dark-gray eyes and fine features. Her smile was especially charming, and she was full of smiles till her sickness began. Dear little child! she had never spoken, only smiled.

To show you that I am not unable to go along with you in the feeling expressed in your letter, I will copy a few verses out of my common-place book.*

> Yes, faith is a goodly anchor
> When the skies are blue and clear;
> At the bows it hangs right stalwart
> With a sturdy iron cheer.

* This poem, revised and enlarged, and called "After the

But when the ship goes to pieces,
And the tempests are all let loose,
It rushes plumb down to the sea-depths,
'Mid slimy seaweed and ooze.

Better then one spar of memory,
One broken plank of the past,
For our human hearts to cling to,
Adrift in the whirling vast.

To the spirit the cross of the spirit,
To the flesh its blind despair,
Clutching fast the thin-worn locket
With its threads of gossamer hair.

O friend! thou reasonest bravely,
Thy preaching is wise and true;
But the earth that stops my darling's ears
Makes mine insensate, too.

That little shoe in the corner,
So worn and wrinkled and brown,
With its emptiness confutes you,
And argues your wisdom down.

But enough, dear Sydney, of death and sorrow. They are not subjects which I think it profitable or wise to talk about, think about, or write about often. Death is a private tutor. We have no fellow-scholars, and must lay our lessons to heart alone.

I was very glad to hear that your little boy had gone through the scarlet-fever—I hope without any reversion of trouble. It is a terrible thing to have only one child. It seems as if the air were full of deadly, invisible bul-

Burial," was printed in 1869, in "Under the Willows, and Other Poems."

lets flying in every direction, so that not a step can be taken in safety.

What would you and the Committee say if I should resign my post in the *Standard?* I feel very strongly inclined to do it at the end of this year (April). It seems to me as if I had said my say—for the present, at least—and had better try silence awhile. I am sick of politics and criticism. Somehow a virtue seems to go out of me at touch of them. I feel as if I could do more good by working in my own vein, however narrow. Tell me what you think about it. Your feelings are the only obstacle in the way of my resigning at once. Your wishing me to hold on would have a great weight with me. You have edited the *Standard* signally well. I said so, you remember, long ago, and I am glad to see that your subscribers are of my opinion. The only fault I find with your salad, as I also said before, is that there may be a little too much mustard now and then. You mix for the Garrisonian palate, which has not, I think, the sensitiveness of entire health.

But I will not do anything for you unless you pay me a visit the next time you come on this way. I wish you and Lizzie to eat our salt as I have eaten yours. I think we could make you very comfortable in the old house. I have a downright quarrel with both you and Briggs on this score. I am in earnest. I don't like one-sided reciprocities, or to be in debt.

Give my love to Briggs, and tell him that I have a letter to him half written, and that it will come soon. I wish to know Page's plans, because I shall come to see him before he goes if I am alive.

Forgive my dull letter, dear Sydney, for I cannot write better just now, and believe me ever

Affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, April 17, 1850.

My dear Sydney,—Though I shall certainly be in New York within a few days (I am only waiting now for some new shirts to be done), yet it would be clownish in me not to answer your letter by return of mail. *That* is altogether too slow. How return a pressure of the hand by next day's post, when the other term of the equation has by this time got his fist in his pocket and is thinking of something else? You were plainly in an excellent mood when you wrote your letter—and let me say that your letters are always pleasant, even those shorter ones with an engraving upon the first half-leaf.* You had seated yourself at your desk in the corner there, you had an uncommonly good cigar, Ebenezer (I don't know whether I was ever impudent enough to tell you that you had wronged the boy with that name, avital or not)—E., I say, was asleep (and I do not wonder that so many poets have written verses to sleeping children —it is as if ten thousand Mahratta cavalry had retired from your territory), Lizzie was sitting with a plot in her head how to cure you of smoking, and then you took out your paper. You wish you could have said it by word of mouth, indeed! My dear Sydney, with all that self-possession (our maligners call it by another

* The engraved banker's-draft.

name) which you have acquired by your so-long abolitionism, you could not have flattered me so to my face. Never was a door so diplomatically opened to a gentleman on the point of being turned out neck and heels. I am marched out, as it were, with a band of music before me thumping and blowing "*See the Conquering Hero Comes!*" with that orchestral impartiality ('tis the way of the world) which heralds with the same tune, and the same energy of brass and sheepskin, the advent of a President or a learned pig. I abdicate with the rapid grace of Richard Cromwell when he sat down upon Monk's sword, stuck (as boys stick crooked pins) in the Protectoral chair. I dangle from silk instead of hemp—a ceremonial consolation, since the choking is the meat of the matter. My resignation is "accepted," like that of a vizier, by a couple of mutes with a bowstring.

My dear Sydney, a kick in the breech may be either symbolical or actual, may be either bestowed with a velvet slipper or a cowhide boot; but it is, after all, a kick in the breech. Your kick—no ecclesiologist could have made it more obscurely symbolical; no slipper could be truer three-pile velvet than yours. I send you one last poem, and so, like that famous ghost of Aubrey's, vanish "with a melodious twang." Paint an expulsive toe rampant where my effigies should appear in the succession of *Standard* editors, as an axe was painted instead of a portrait in Faliero's place among the Doges, and write thereunder—*Jacobus ex off. decess. per patibulum A.D. XV Kal. Maii. A.D. MDCCCL.*

Perhaps, instead of saying "I resign," a better form

would be the passive "I am resigned." And so I am. You do me no more than justice in taking it for granted that I am not a fool. I am quite too proud to take offence easily, and I think I have given the Committee a pennyworth. At the same time, I think you overestimate my value to the *Standard*. You remember that I said so frankly when I was first engaged. I have never felt that *entire* freedom without which a man cannot do his best. As there has never been a oneness of sentiment between me and the Society, I retain for them at parting the same feeling which I have ever had. It has never been a matter of dollars between us, for I might have earned much more in other ways—not to mention what I have indirectly lost (and gladly) by my connection with you fanatics. For every poem (except the more exclusively antislavery ones) which has been printed in the *Standard* I could have got four times the money paid me by the Committee. This I wish them distinctly to understand, that they may not imagine that I came to them with my hat held out for an alms. I can truly say that I have been more vexed by the stupid want of appreciation shown by some of our worthies towards you than by any suspicion that they did not rate me highly enough.

And now, dear Sydney, let me only add further, that I trust our friendship will only end at that bourne which is the common close of all. I will not promise to write to you once a month, for you would find letters supplied by contract stupid enough. But I *will* think of you much oftener than that. An author's works are his letters to friends, and if they cannot feel in reading

them that they are freshly remembered, then the works are not good for much. When I came home last night, I found two pleasures (besides Maria and Mabel and the rest) awaiting me. One was your letter, and the other was a letter from an old friend (and you may suppose he must be a friend, for he is a slaveholder) to whom I had not written and from whom I had not heard for seven years. And my love for him was as fresh as when we parted nine years ago, when our lives were all in spring-blossom, not a petal fallen. So pen, ink, and paper are no necessary interlocutors. When there is a need of it I shall send such ambassadors, but, anyhow and anywhere, I shall always remain

Most affectionately your friend,

J. R. Lowell.

TO THE SAME

Sunday, May 19, 1850.

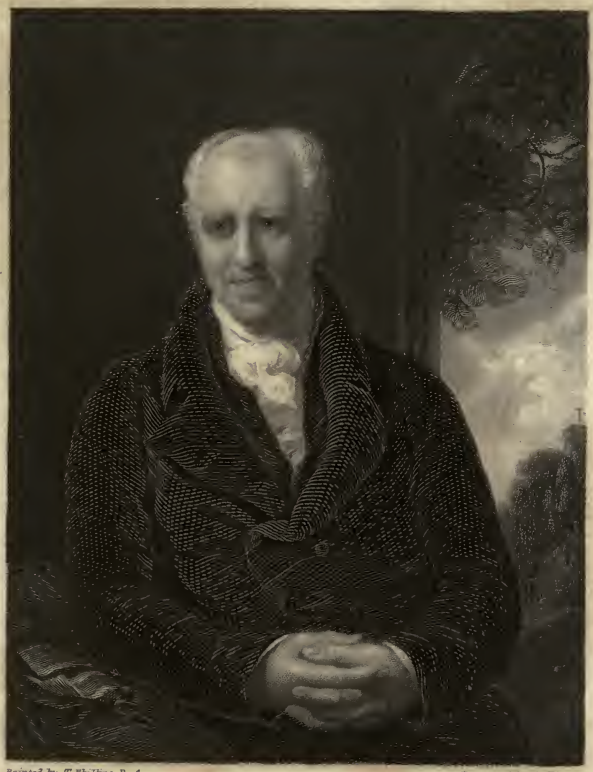
My dear Sydney,—I now fully appreciate the wisdom of that law of Maine which puts off executions till a year has passed after sentence. It gives a chance for something to turn up in a man's favor. What is to be done in the way of reparation to me? I, an innocent man as it now appears, hanged myself in my cell (on a friendly hint from one of the jurors that there was no chance for me) to avoid the opprobrium of public hemp, and now how are the lacerated feelings of a heart-broken wife and a fatherless daughter to be healed? Still more important—how is my neck to be reset? I think I may not immodestly compare myself with Socrates in my manner of ending, however unlike that provoking philosopher

in my previous life. For he, you remember, was "allowed" to drink his own hemlock, and could not legally have that delicate privilege granted him until the sacred vessel Πάραλος had gone to Delos and back again. The sacred vessel in my case was the steamboat which conveyed "a select number of youths and virgins" to the New York Convention and brought them home to their anxious friends.

But, on the other hand, as all the little accidents of life are by the wise man turned to account, and as Madame Tussaud made the discovery that the effigies of a dead criminal would bring in thousands of shillings, while no one would expend a solitary sixpence to look upon the living image of Innocence herself, so I think that, under the present circumstances, I may fairly set a higher price upon my labors. Consider for a moment what an attraction it would be if you could announce in the *prospectus* of next year's *Standard* that the new volume would be enriched with the contributions of a well-known unhappy gentleman who lately laid violent hands upon himself when under sentence of death. You might say that the value of the *Standard* would be very much increased as a *noose*-paper, that it would be found that I was (h)altered for the better, that I had at last got the *hang* of editorship, that my labors had merely been *suspended;* that, in short, the Committee had now consented to give me *cart blanche*, rope enough, my full swing, etc.; that I should write absolute *chokers* in the way of editorials, and strike a pleasant *cord* in the memory of the public.

So far I had written this morning when I was called

away to give Maria and Mab a drive. It is now after dinner, and it is a matter of universal observation that, in proportion as the belly is well filled, the "individual" becomes more respectable and less some other qualities which, perhaps, render him full as agreeable a member of society. Now, to this new proposition of the Committee, what shall I say? I had intended to have "spelled" you (as we Yankees say) now and then with an article *gratis*, and had been churning upon one for a day or two, but how shall I prove it? If the Society offer coin of the realm, it is not in the heart of fallen man to refuse it, especially when such fallen man has just purchased a suit of clothes (badge of the fall) and—does not know so clearly now whence the money is to come that shall pay therefor as he seemed to when he stood triumphant in the tailor's shop and easily bespoke the same. Tailors, by the way, differ from the rest of mankind in this, that whereas all other men in Adam died, so by the consequence of Adam's transgression these get their living. And truly, in so large a matter as the damnation of the whole human race, it would not have become Satan to have stood upon trifles, and to have haggled for these fractions and ninth-parts of men. Do not flatter yourself, my dear Sydney, that you will enjoy the benefit of this exception because you wield a pair of scissors in the way of your trade. No, I am well persuaded that there is not salt enough in the whole editorial fraternity to pickle so much as one of them. Given over for their sins to printers' devils during life, their lot will not change, except in the quality of their diabolic tormentors, after death. . . .



Painted by T. Phillips, R. A. *Engraved by E. Finden.*

REV^{D} GEORGE CRABBE, L.L.D.

I have written, you see, a diplomatic letter without saying whether I should be a "corresponding editor" or not. But the truth is, I have received no communication from the Committee yet, and so have not made up my mind. There are several fires desirous that some of my irons should be thrust in them—with your fanatical blazes I should only burn my fingers. But, at any rate, with much love to Lizzie and Master Anonymous, I remain

Most affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Election Day, Nov., 1850.

My dear Sydney,—I am just recovering from a kind of ursine existence, a mental winter, during which I have been living upon my own fat. Of course I mean intellectually, for physically I have not much adipocere laid up, and unless the thought of something after death or the like should give me paws, I could not bear it with any hope of surviving by suction. Not that I have been altogether vacant of thought, or the food for it, as may perhaps appear by and by; but pen and ink have seemed insufficient and irrelevant somehow, so that even such a grasshopper as the writing of a letter has seemed a burthen.

I should, nevertheless, have answered Lizzie's letter, if Maria had not done so in my absence. Do you tell her that I did not wish to give her a little keepsake in order to please *her*, but for a much more selfish reason—namely, to please myself. You see, my dear Sydney, that the only money I ever have a chance to part with

in the way of that kind of gift is that which has never got into my pocket. In that nest riches become fledged at once, and fly in all directions like the four-and-twenty blackbirds when the pie was opened. I can go without money for I don't know how long, and not fret myself at the want of it. I have been in that condition ever since my return from Canada—in that condition, or maybe a little worse. I claim no merit for such patience, because I know that those suns and stars, the greater and lesser luminaries of the pocket, have in my case calculable orbits and stated periods of return. Nor am I wholly without experience of comets, unexpected apparitions, nor of meteoric "rocks" (of that species wherewith our countrymen desire to have "a pocket full") falling I know not whence. I only thought that it would be pleasant to me if I knew that some little memorial of me stood upon your table, to remind you of me now and then if I should go to Europe, or take that inevitable journey to the country (not so far off, indeed, but) whence there are no *regular* mails, whatever the Rochester knockers* may be. Now, Lizzie may make *me* a present of this small gratification or not, just as she pleases, but, at any rate, the money can never come into *my* pouch. The black crow that flies in our country's "heaven's sweetest air," the bird of antislavery, may have it; in other words, you may give it to the *caws*, but I will none of it. . . .

I sent you an article last week, but had no time to add even a line of private matter, as our mail closes at the

* It was at Rochester, N. Y., that spirit-rapping began.

very inconvenient hour of one. Inconvenient for me, at least, for I always write on the morning of the latest day, and so have barely three hours after breakfast. I wrote that in such a hurry that I fear there may be some blunders in it. I had some ideas in my head when I went to bed the night before, but I am suspicious that they escaped between that and next morning. I have been hoping to write something in verse about this horrible Slave Bill,* something in Hosea Biglow vein, with a *refrain* to it that would take hold of the popular ear (long enough to be easily taken hold of, you will say). I should like to tack something to Mr. Webster (the most meanly and foolishly treacherous man I ever heard of), like the tail which I furnished to Mr. John P. Robinson. But I wish to be sure that it is good enough before I try it on in public, for a failure in such a case would be disastrous. I walk about crooning over various ridiculous burthens and cadences, and am not without hope that he may catch it yet.

To-day, as you will see by the date of my letter, is our voting-day. What the result will be I have less means of judging than most men. But we abolitionists, you know, have no reason to be over-sanguine. I cannot help thinking that Mr. Mann† will be re-elected, and I hope he will, for I think he has had a sufficiently severe experience of the folly of trying to serve party and duty at the same time. Like the tapster in Henry IVth, he has

* The Bill for the rendition of fugitive slaves.

† Mr. Horace Mann, then a candidate for Congress, but mainly remembered and honored for his services to popular education in Massachusetts.

had only time to cry "Anon, sir," to both parties at once, without satisfying either. Mr. Palfrey will not be chosen. He has less chance than at a special election, because the Hunkers turn out more fully to-day. I shall vote the "Union" ticket (half Free-soil, half Democrat), not from any love of the Democrats, but because I believe it to be the best calculated to achieve some practical result. It is a great object to overturn the Whig domination, and this seems to be the only lever to pry them over with. Yet I have my fears that if we get a Democratic governor he will play some trick or other. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*, if you will pardon stale Latin to Parson Wilbur. . . .

Now that the power of writing has returned to me, you may expect articles pretty regularly. As a general thing, the more I have to do the better I can do it, and I wish this winter to be a productive one. I have promised Story* (this is between ourselves) to go back to Italy with him in June, if I can sell some land wherewith to pay our expenses. How long we shall stay I know not, but the farther I can get from *American* slavery the better I shall feel. Such enormities as the Slave Law weigh me down without rebound, make me unhappy, and too restless to work well in my own special vineyard.

God bless both of you,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Jan. 3, 1851.

My dear Sydney,— . . . I should have kept on writ-

* Lowell's friend from boyhood, the eminent sculptor.

ing regularly for the *Standard*, but that I was interrupted by two pressing exigencies. In the first place, I had (with an eye to the monetary crisis which always takes place in my affairs at the feast of the New Year) contracted to supply Graham with a humorous poem before Christmas.* I never undertook humor by contract before. The general result may be stated as ill-humor. However, I had promised. I had a subject, but, for the life of me, I could not begin. Fancy yourself knocked down for a pun at a dinner-party. With your head full of 'em, you would be as incompetent to the percussion-powder explosion under the chairman's hammer as—Greeley, or ———. Well, I could neither begin that nor do anything else. At last, having begun, I was interrupted to write a manifesto on the part of my sister in consequence of ———'s blackguard letters.† Fancy me writing for the *Daily Advertiser*. It was the severest job I ever undertook. The result is only seven columns (and those only a kind of propylæum, for I could hardly enter into the subject); yet I believe I was longer at work in actual hours than in writing all Hosea Biglow and the "Fable for Critics." I shall send you copies when (or if) I have any. As soon as I got through that, I had to go about being funny again—with what success you will see in Graham by and by. It is comfortable writing for Graham, for one never sees or hears of his pieces again unless he choose to collect them. I lay in bed the other

* For his Magazine.

† Letters in which Mrs. Putnam, his sister, had been attacked for her published opinions and statements in regard to the revolution in Hungary.

morning studying the rime upon the windows (which, I remember, used to be a favorite school-exercise with me at Mr. Wells's), and shaped out a little poem, which I shall send you for the *Standard* if it ever gets upon paper. At any rate, I shall send *something* before long. . . .

Affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, April 20, 1851.

My dear Sydney,—Edward Davis writes us that he wishes we could persuade you to go to Italy with us—to "go along," as the Philadelphians say—if Lizzie will pardon me. Would there be any use in our trying? There is nothing I should like better. (Maria has written a letter to Lizzie which I did not see—so if I say anything over again you must forgive it.) We are going in a fine ship which will sail from Boston on the 1st July. She was built for a packet, has fine accommodations, and will land us at Genoa—a very fit spot for us New-Worlders to land at and make our first discovery of the Old.

A Castilia y a Leon
(To Yankees also be it known)
Nuevo mundo dió Colon;
And so we Western men owe a
Kind of debt to Genoa.

Also people can live like princes (only more respectably) in Italy on fifteen hundred a year. We are going to travel on our own land. That is, we shall spend at the rate of about ten acres a year, selling our birthrights as

we go along for messes of European pottage. Well, Raphael and the rest of them are worth it. My plan is to sit down in Florence (where, at least, the coral and bells and the gutta-percha dogs will be cheaper) till I have cut my eye(talian) teeth. *Tuscany* must be a good place for that. Then I shall be able to travel about without being too monstrously cheated. Another inducement for you—the Brownings are living there, from whom (you will be pleased to hear) I got a kind message the other day through Charles Norton. Do you think the matter over, and be ready to debate it when I come to New York, as I shall before I go, to bid you all good-by.

We lost five trees by the gale last Wednesday, all firs and fifty feet high. I saw one of them snap like a pipe-stem as I sat at breakfast. It is some consolation to think that they were upset by the heaviest blow ever known in these parts. I also had my personal losses by the storm, though not recorded by the *Cambridge Chronicle*, which contained a sublime description of the flood, and how it stood several feet deep on Magazine Street, and which almost shed tears over the architectural wreck of dozens of those little square edifices which adorn the rear of every Grecian temple in Cambridgeport. I lost a hayrick. It must have presented a magnificent spectacle, and I regret that its struggles and final downfall were not witnessed by the editor of the *Chronicle*, who would have described it epically. Think of me in future as one of the sufferers by the Great Storm. I was thinking of getting up a corporation for the purchase of *mashgraass*, but that is all over now.

I have written some verses which I enclose—but suppose they are too late for this week's *Standard*. If not, let them go in, or somebody else may forestall my market. I agonized to write something about the kidnapping of Sims, but the affair was so atrocious that I could not do it. The flax-cotton is a great thing. You remember "Schmelzle's Journey to Flätz" (Richter), and how he read at last in a chemical work that by a simple process the oxygen might be extracted from the air, and instantly was horror-struck at the thought that some chemist in New Holland might at that very moment be perfecting an experiment by which all the oxygen should be discharged from the atmosphere, and so, *whit!* we all perish? Well this reminds one of it. Claussen with his stem of flax and his three or four phials there in his closet has fairly taken the oxygen out of the air on which slavery (and proslavery) lives. . . .

Ever yours,

J. R. L.

TO FRANCIS G. SHAW

Rome, 1851.

Dear Frank,—

While this I scribble, I'm sitting for my picture
(And, to tell the honest truth, much rather would be kicked your
Obedient, humble servant) to a gentleman named Kneeland *
(Page will tell you who he is), and at present cannot see land,
Tossed, as in a vile French steamer, on a cross sea of endeavor
To get into an attitude at once sublime and clever,

* Not the true name.

That shall give to whoso sees it no trouble in supposing
'Tis an epic or a tragedy that I am just composing,
To while away the time with; but, in fact, though he don't
know it,
I'm at work in my vocation, as a bored satiric poet,
In taking off my taker-off who groweth dull and duller
Twixt studying my attitudes and lecturing me on color,
Out of which series number one (of to-be-published lectures)
I, with such grapnels as I had, have fished these two conjectures:
First—that black's truly white (or somehow so), and second—
That Newton did not know so much as commonly is reckoned.
Thus, while through mist-abysses I'm gradually sinking,
He wishes me to look (d'ye see?) as 'twere profoundly thinking,
That he may paint me, not as if I were a bale of cloth or
A log of wood, but rather as a poet and an author;
So, while he shifts from chair to chair, considering my attitude,
I take my pen (at his request) and thus display my gratitude.
He's a man of some perception (though he *will* call project *progic*),
Tells me that fancy in my make's subordinate to logic,
That my mental current's equable, not torrent-like nor lazy,
And that to paint me as a bard deliberately going crazy
And pouncing on a stanza as a hawk would on his quarry,
Would not express my character, for which I'm truly sorry,
Since he must paint me as I am (you will perceive), and so it
Will not appear to future times that I, as fits a poet,
Had not, 'mongst my other faculties, the chief one of insanity.
Meanwhile, revolving round me still, as if he were a planet, he
Informs me he's approaching now a definite conception,

Wants me to cock my head a bit, and try by self-deception
To make myself believe that e'en this moment in my occiput
I lay the keel and shape the ribs, and on the mental stocks I put
Some mighty ship of thought, some seventy-four-like notion,
That one day shall float proudly on the literary ocean.
In truth, I'm vainly trying to hit on something that will stop his
Morphean style of lecturing, in sentences like poppies,
Which has already put to sleep one leg and, slowly rising,
Will soon o'erpower the rest of me, all senses magnetizing.
He has begun the drawing now, and, in a kind of dark hole
Behind a half-closed shutter, has made a mark with charcoal
For me (whene'er I cease to write) to fix my thought-rapt eyes on
(That's *his* phrase), while he sits at ease and (devil take him!) tries on
One posture after t'other with a burnt stick that goes gritting,
Grit, gritting o'er the canvas, till I fancy I am sitting
Upon my own nerves somehow, with their sharp points all turned upward,
And more edge upon my teeth than the vision of a cupboard
Full of vinegar and oysters would put upon a poor soul's
Who'd been starving in the desert till the dirtiest of Moor's holes
(Where dried barley could be got with a little salt to put on it)
Would seem a branch from Paradise with its ambrosial fruit on it.

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Nov. 22, 1852.

My dear Friend,— . . . I am very well and rather older—more inclined to stay in the quiet, if it may be,

and lead purely a life of letters. . . . I have written nothing since I left home except a few letters and a journal now and then. I have been absorbing. I have studied Art to some purpose, and like Page's pictures better than ever. Him I saw first in Florence. I went to the Uffizi and passed him without knowing him. All his beautiful hair was cut short, and the top of his head getting bare. After I had passed, I heard him step back from his picture and recognized the tread. He was copying Titian as he was never copied before. I used to see picture and copy side by side—too severe a test—but his copies will bear it. He spent the winter in Florence and I in Rome, whither he goes this autumn. Rome is the only place for him. Few people stop long in Florence, and few orders are given there—in Rome a great many. I saw him next in Venice, where he was making two wonderful sketches of the "Assumption" and the "Presentation in the Temple of the Virgin." We were together all the time nearly—in the gallery of the Academy, in the *gondola*, and at the Piazza in the evenings. He is just the same noble, great man, and as fanatical about a certain person's poems as ever. He has become something of a Swedenborgian, and finds great comfort in the inspired Bacon's writings. . . .

I am as ever most affectionately your friend,

J. R. L.

TO MRS. FRANCIS G. SHAW

Elmwood, Jan. 11, 1853.

My dear Sarah,—You know that I promised solemnly to write you a letter from Switzerland, and therefore, of

course, I didn't do it. These epistolary promises to pay always do (or at least always ought to) come back protested. A letter ought always to be the genuine and natural flower of one's disposition—proper both to the writer and the season—and none of your turnip japonicas cut laboriously out of a cheap and flabby material. Then, when you have sealed it up, it comes out fresh and fragrant. I do not like shuttle-cock correspondences. What is the use of our loving people if they can't let us owe them a letter? if they can't be sure we keep on loving them if we don't keep sending an acknowledgment under our hands and seals once a month? As if there were a statute of limitations for affection! The moment Love begins to think of Duty, he may as well go hang himself with his own bow-string. All this means that if I should never write you another letter (which is extremely likely), and we should never meet again till I drop in upon you some day in another planet, I shall give an anxious look at myself in the mirror (while I am waiting for you to come down), and shall hear the flutter of your descending wings with the same admiring expectation as I should now listen for your foot upon the stairs. . . .

Now, the reason I am writing to you is this: I spent Sunday with Edmund Quincy at Dedham, and, as I came back over the rail yesterday, I was roused from a reverie by seeing "West Roxbury Station" written up over the door of a kind of Italian villa at which we stopped. I almost twisted my head off looking for the house on the hill. There it stood in mourning still, just as Frank painted it. The color suited my mood exact-

ly. The eyes of the house were shut, the welcoming look it had was gone; it was dead. I am a Platonist about houses. They get to my eye a shape from the souls that inhabit them. My friends' dwellings seem as peculiar to them as their bodies, looks, and motions. People have no right to sell their dead houses; they should burn them as they used to burn corpses. Suppose these bodies of ours could be reinhabited, and that our heirs could turn an honest penny (as American heirs certainly would) by disposing of them by auction. How could we endure to see Miss Amelia Augusta Smith's little soul giggling out of those sacred caves where we had been wont to catch glimpses of the shrinking Egeria of refined and noble womanhood? With what horror should we hear the voice that had thrilled us with song, startled us with ambushes of wit, or softened us with a sympathy that made us feel somehow as if our mother's tears were mixed with its tones—I say, with what horror should we hear it using all its pathos and all its melodious changes for the cheapening of a tarlatan muslin or the describing the dress that Eliza Ann wore at her wedding! I was too far off, thank God, to see Mrs. Smith looking out of your dead house's windows, but I mused of these things as the train rolled on, and caught fragments of the vapid talk of a couple on the seat before me. I have buried that house now and flung my pious handful of earth over it and set up a head-stone—and I shall never look up to the hill-top again, let me pass it never so often. But I resolved to write a letter to its departed spirit.

. . . It is hard writing at such a distance. If one be

in good spirits, and write a nice, pleasant, silly letter, it may find those to whom it goes on the other side of the world in the midst of a new sorrow, and will be as welcome as a half-tipsy wedding-guest at a funeral. The thing which everybody here is talking about is the Tippers. The Rappers are considered quite *slow* nowadays. Tables speak as inspired, consolatory nothings are literally delivered *ex cathedrâ*. Bores whom we thought buried out of the way long ago revive in washstands and bedsteads. Departed spirits still rule us—but no longer metaphorically from their urns — they speak to us through the excited centre-table. I have heard of a particular teapoy that was vehement, slowly argumentative, blandly sympathetic, wildly romantic, and all with its legs alone. Little did John Chinaman dream what he was making, as little as John Shakespeare knew that he had begotten the world's wonder William. A neighbor of ours has an exhorting boot-jack, and I expect every day to hear of the spirit of Diogenes in a wash-tub. Judge Wells (*Aunt* Wells, as he is affectionately called by the Bar) is such a powerful *medium* that he has to drive back the furniture from following him when he goes out, as one might a pack of too affectionate dogs. I have no doubt I shall meet him some day with a footstool gambolling at his side or leaping up on his reluctant legs. . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Feb. 17, 1853.

. . . By the way, you ought, it seems to me, to assume a nominative personality—I mean, take an edito-

George Wm Curtis

rial name, like Kit North, Oliver Yorke, and Sylvanus Urban, Gent. It will be very useful on occasion. Just think it over. The public (hallowed name!) like these impersonal persons. They invest them with a halo of pleasant imaginary characteristics, and *cotton* to them more kindly than to downright, vulgar flesh-and-blood. A "comic man" wants the use of some such *nominis umbra* for notes and occasional interjections—so that he may not always soliloquize, but may cut himself up when he wants a dialogue. Besides, one feels free to attribute his own good qualities to a personage of the fancy, and can, by means of him, expose all his pleasant weak points and silly little tastes and whimwhams without egotism. Hence Bickerstaff, De Coverley, Mr. Shandy, Geoffrey Crayon, Teufelsdröckh, and the rest. It is worth considering. Talk it over with the Pilgrim,* who is good at names. Give my best regards to him. I liked him as I do not often like new acquaintances. . . .

God bless you,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, June 10, 1853.

My dear Friend,—Of course I am sorry that "Our Own" has not succeeded, the more so as I was beginning to hope, from some things I heard, that folks were getting to like it better. For all that, I cannot give up fancying that there is good in it—and I can bear this kind of cross as well as most people. My counsel is

* George William Curtis, then associated with Mr. Briggs in the editorship of *Putnam's Magazine.*

not to print any more of it. That it should be damned is nothing. I could print it, as Fielding did one of his stupid farces, with "as it was d—d in *Putnam's Magazine*" on the title-page. But I could not bear to have you go on publishing it to the detriment of the *Magazine*, merely out of friendship to me. You have no right to, for you are a trustee, and your first duty is to Putnam. I thank God for giving me at least this talent —that I love my friends better than I do my own pride, and can almost persuade myself that I love them nearly as well as my interest. There is no *spatula* with which you can hold the Public's tongue while you force things down their throat, and if there were there would be no use in it. These rubs, I fancy, brighten a man's wits, and may help to let him know if his mind be an Aladdin's lamp with which he can build palaces, or mere Brummagem which shows the copper the more you scour. At any rate, it is a charming provision of nature that all such adventures end, like Falstaff's scene with Prince Hal, in our thinking better of ourselves for valiant lions ever after. The chief result of the affair will be that I shall add to a letter which I wrote yesterday to Story, in which I spoke of "Our Own," this P. S.: "I just hear from Briggs that it is irretrievably damned." *Conclusum est de illo—periit.*

Meanwhile the thing has done me good already. It has given me something which I have a right to be annoyed at and so relieved me of some imaginary stuff that darkened my mind. I do honestly feel more troubled on your account than my own, for I am sensible that I have disappointed a hope you had that I

might be of service to you in a way that would be profitable to myself. I am in the position of a man who has allowed a note to be protested which has been endorsed by a friend. I owe you a large debt of affection and friendship, and, as I cannot pay you in any other way, I must even do it in kind—not a bad way neither, for it is a currency rarer, as this world goes, than pine-tree shillings of the first issue. Authors ought certainly to be as sensible as shopkeepers, and to know that if the public does not want their wares, it will not buy them any the sooner for being called fool and blockhead. There may be a satisfaction in it, but it will not help pay a quarter's rent. The best way is to take down sign, shut up shop, and go westward where there are fresh fields and pastures new, and both fortune and health to be dug from the soil. *My* West is to be found in a course of lectures, which I have already been paid for, and which I am to deliver before the Lowell Institute next winter. I dare say they will be all the better for my having some of my conceit knocked out of me, and I can revenge myself on the dead poets for the injuries received by one whom the public won't allow among the living. I have also got so far as to have written the first chapter of a prose book—a sort of New England autobiography, which may turn out well, and I have the "Nooning" to finish—which *shall* turn out well.

I hope you will print Clough's * article—both on his account, for he is a man of genius, and on your own,

* Clough was at this time resident in Cambridge. He contributed several admirable articles to *Putnam's Magazine*.

for he will make a valuable contributor. His "Bothie" is a rare and original poem, quite Homeric in treatment and modern to the full in spirit. I do not know a poem more impregnated with the nineteenth century or fuller of tender force and shy, delicate humor. Is it within the possibilities of human nature that I like it all the better, and feel more inclined to stand by it, because it was unsuccessful? At any rate, I formed my opinion of it when I did not know whether it were popular or not. An oriole and a linnet have been singing against each other under my window, as the old minnesingers did in their song-tournaments. The linnet has kept the field, and, mounted on a higher elm-spray, sings louder than ever. Well, singing is pleasant, after all, and there may be some one whom you know naught of who is delighted as I am with the linnet. A bobolink and a catbird have entered the lists now, and the poor linnet is silenced. I think the bobolink the best singer in the world, even undervaluing the lark and the nightingale in the comparison. We do not ask any variety in the songs of birds. It is their very individuality that pleases us and our knowing the old friend by his first note. I fancy it is the same with poets, and that the man who can contrive to get *himself* into his verses, no matter how small he is, will live with the best of them. . . .

Ever most affectionately yours (though d—d),

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Sept., 1853.

. . . I have corrected "Moosehead," stricken out a sentence or two, added an exculpatory colophon, and

you have it with this. I notice a suspicious "2d" on the leaves of the last half. Don't cut it in halves. It will make but eleven pages, and is much better all together. If it is dull, the public won't thank you for making two doses of it; if entertaining, they will be glad to have it all at once. . . .

The October number hasn't come yet, and we miss it —as it is the only periodical we have. Of September I got *two* copies, and you may think if I get twelve in the year it is all right. I wish to see Maria's poem. She is quite cutting me out as a poet—though she laughs when I tell her so, God bless her! But I am going to astonish you (and everybody else, except Page) one of these days, my boy. I am beginning, I hope, to find out that I can *work*. Laziness has ruined me hitherto.

Ever lovingly yours,

COBUS.

TO THE SAME

Oct. 6, 1853.

. . . I have copied a poem of Maria's which it would be a great pleasure to me to see in the next number. The delight which it gives me to see them printed and liked is a great pleasure to her. And it gives her something to think about—a sort of tie to this world, as it were. I cannot bear to write it, but she is very dangerously ill—growing weaker and weaker. You must give my best regards to Curtis, and say that I must give up the hope of a visit from him this autumn.

Will you also send me whatever is due to her for the other poem?—for she would like to spend it for something.

It is only within the last week that I have realized the danger. She has been so often ill and rallied from it that I supposed she would soon begin to get better. But there seems no force left now.

I understand now what is meant by "the waters have gone over me." Such a sorrow opens a door clear down into one's deepest nature that he had never suspected before.

God bless you.

Ever yours,

J. R. Lowell.

No greater natural sorrow can befall a man than that which came to Lowell in the death of his wife. But he was not broken down by it. His temperament was too healthy, his character too strong to allow him to give way to despair. Of his four children, one little girl was left to him, for whose sake he must live. He sought distraction in work, and employed himself in writing. For the sake of change of scene and air, he spent the next summer on the sea-shore at Beverly. In the autumn he set to work upon a series of twelve lectures on the English Poets, to be read at the Lowell Institute in Boston, in the winter. His powers of critical appreciation and reflection were displayed to advantage in these lectures. No such discourses had been heard in America. They added greatly to his reputation as critic, scholar, and poet. In January, 1855, he was appointed to the professorship of "French and Spanish Languages and Literatures, and Belles-Lettres," in Harvard College—a chair to which its previous occupants, Ticknor and

Longfellow, had given the highest distinction. He accepted the place with the condition that, before entering on its duties, he should spend a year or more in Europe, for the purpose of making special preparatory studies.

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Nov. 25, 1853.

My dear old Friend, — Your letter came while I was sadly sealing up and filing away my old letters, for I feel now for the first time old, and as if I had a past— something, I mean, quite alien to my present life, and from which I am now exiled. How beautiful that past was and how I cannot see it clearly yet for my tears I need not tell you. I can only hope and pray that the sweet influences of thirteen years spent with one like her may be seen and felt in my daily life henceforth. At present I only feel that there *is* a chamber whose name is Peace, and which opens towards the sunrising, and that I am not in it. I keep repeating to myself "by and by," "by and by," till that trivial phrase has acquired an intense meaning. I know very well that this sunset-glow, even of a life like hers, will fade by degrees; that the brisk, busy day will return with its bills and notes and beef and beer, intrusive, distracting —but in the meantime I pray. I do abhor sentimentality from the bottom of my soul, and cannot wear my grief upon my sleeves, but yet I look forward with agony to the time when she may become a memory instead of a constant presence. She promised to be with me if that were possible, but it demands all the

energy of the soul to believe without sight, and all the unmetaphysical simplicity of faith to distinguish between fact and fancy. I know that the little transparent film which covers the pupil of my eye is the only wall between her world and mine, but that hair-breadth is as effectual as the space between us and the sun. I cannot see her, I cannot feel when I come home that she comes to the door to welcome me as she always did. I can only hope that when I go through the last door that opens for all of us I may hear her coming step upon the other side. That her death was so beautiful and calm and full of faith as it was gives me no consolation, for it was only that rare texture of her life continuing to the very end, and makes me feel all the more what I had and what I have not.

I began this upon a great sheet because it reminded me of the dear old times that are dead and buried now. But I cannot write much more. I keep myself employed most of the time—in something mechanical as much as possible—and in walking. . . .

You say something of coming to Boston. I wish I could see you. It would be a great comfort. . . .

I am glad for your friendly sake that my article was a popular one, but the news of it only pained me. It came too late to please the only human being to please whom I greatly cared and whose satisfaction was to me prosperity and fame. But her poem—how beautiful it was, and how fitting for the last! . . .

So God bless you, and think of me always as your more loving friend,

J. R. L.